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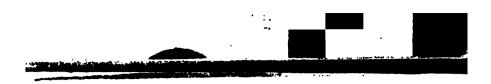
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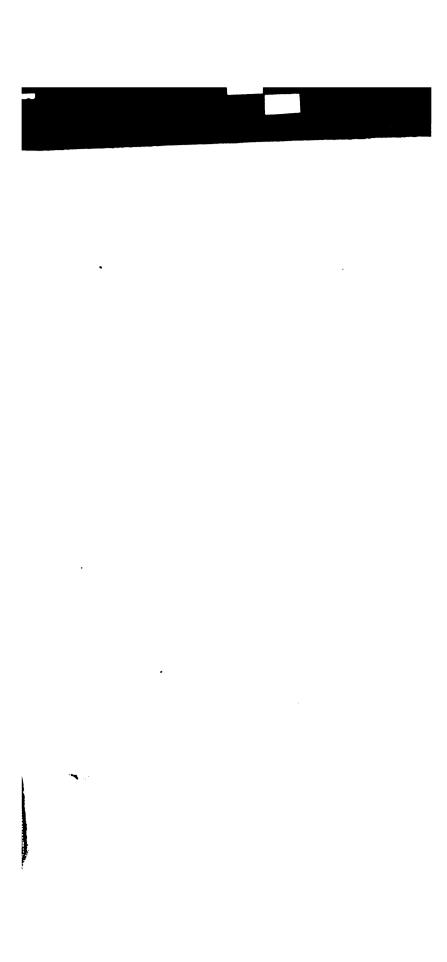








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LIFE AND CONVERSATIONS

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.



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LIFE AND CONVERSATIONS

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OF

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

(FOUNDED CHIEFLY UPON BOSWELL).

BY

ALEXANDER MAIN.

WITH A PREFACE BY GEORGE HENRY LEWES.

"Johnson, to be sure, has a roughness in his manner; but no man alive has a more tender heart. He has nothing of the bear but his shin."—OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"Life itself
May not express us all, may leave the worst
And the best too, like tunes in mechanism
Never awaked."—Spanish Gypsy.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY. 1874.



LONDON:
BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO., PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS

THE AUTHOR DEDICATES

THIS RE-TELLING OF AN OLD TALE

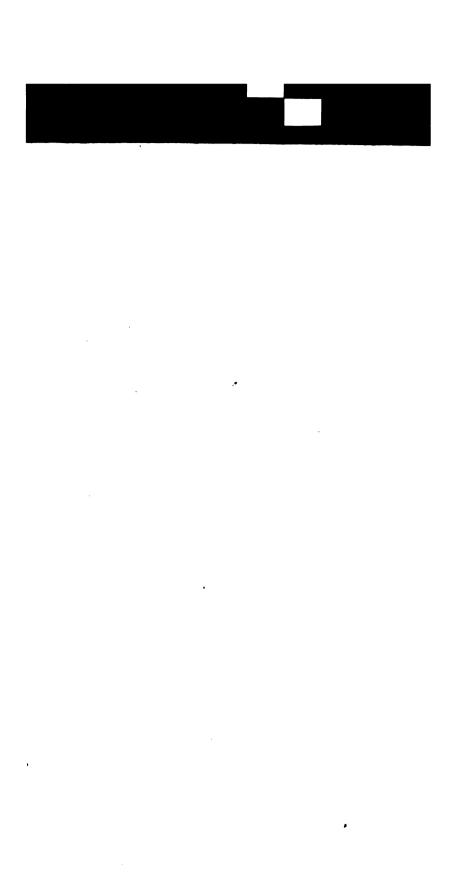
TO

CHARLES AND MARY COWDEN CLARKE

IN TOKEN OF GRATITUDE TO PERSONAL FRIENDS

AND ADMIRATION OF FAITHFUL WORKERS

IN A NOBLE FIELD.



PREFACE.

BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON not only holds an undisputed place among the classical achievements of English Literature, but belongs to that group within the classical group which may be distinguished as consisting of works both well-reputed and read, the other classics being well-reputed and unopened. No one who has this book is content to have it on his shelves, a mere respectability in calf-gilt—one of Charles Lamb's favourite aversions, "a book which no gentleman's library should be If it is on his shelves, it is often on his table. It is handled with fond familiarity, and taken down from time to time to be dipped into or consulted. It belongs to the intimate circle: is neither a grand acquaintance, nor a poor relation. It is a book which he quotes in conversation; and when sympathetic listeners are at hand he will now and then read from it passage after passage, laughing over and over again at the well-known quips and retorts, as if they were novelties. He is intolerant of people who do not share his admiration for the "dear old Doctor"—thin liberals who scorn Johnson's toryism, prim rationalists who despise his superstition, and literati reared under modern influences who are amazed at his want of poetic insight. From all such unsympathetic minds he turns impatiently

to the more agreeable listeners who have no opinion, whom he regards as possible converts; and with suasive eagerness urges them to lose no time in "forming a judgment for themselves"—the plain translation of this exhortation being, "Read Boswell, and you will agree with me."

I will not deny that I too am one of those who are impatient of any lukewarmness on this point. Boswell's JOHNSON is for me a sort of test-book: according to a man's judgment of it, I am apt to form my judgment of him. may not always be a very good test, but it is never a very bad one. In spite, however, of its great reputation, the book is less read now-a-days than its admirers imagine; and I have often been surprised to find how many cultivated men and women, who would assuredly be able to do it full justice, were satisfied with vague second-hand knowledge of it, simply because they had allowed the idle trash of the hour to come between them and it-preferring to read what "every one" is reading to-day, and no one will read to-morrow. This neglect of a work which has delighted generations, and will continue to delight posterity, is partly due to the mental enervation produced by a constantly increasing solicitation of the attention to new works, mostly of the mushroom type, springing up in a night to disappear in a day; and partly to the fact that BOSWELL'S LIFE, besides its own defects resulting from the author's deficiencies, has the impersonal defect of belonging to a period of literary culture in many respects unlike, and even opposed to our own—so that what in his day would pass for literary graces, in our day pass as artificial flowers, and those faded. Many passages which had their interest then, are now remorselessly skipped. The size of the work is also an obstacle to its acceptance. Readers so tolerant of trash in the language of to-day yawn over the langueurs et longueurs tolerated by our fathers. Even the staunchest admirer of Boswell's Life must admit that it is three times as long as it need be.

On my observing that many were discouraged by its length, and that others found it too dull to be read through, the idea occurred to me several years ago (in 1855 or 56) that it would be a feasible scheme to detach from these volumes all that gave them perennial interest and compress it into a single volume, without sacrificing anything but the thin soup of Boswellian narrative and comment, in which the solid meat of Johnson was dished up. But on reflection this scheme of an abridgment of Boswell appeared less and less attractive. General experience has declared that abridgments are rarely successful. And there are good reasons why this should be In making an abridgment we select only what is essential, expecting the reader to supply the rest from his own stores. But no reliance is more treacherous than reliance on the reader's co-operation: if he is not ignorant, he is probably indolent: very often he has not got the cement which will bind your bricks into a wall, or if he has got the cement he is too lazy to apply it.

Still, although I gave up my scheme of an abridgment, the original suggestion which prompted it recurred from time to time, under various aspects, and at length shaped itself into the scheme of a new LIFE OF JOHNSON, founded on Boswell, but entirely rewritten. As a collection of data Boswell's narrative could be gratefully used, and his inimitable reports of the conversations, stripped of their superfluous garnish, might be preserved. The four volumes of the original might thus be essentially reproduced in one.

The charm and value of such a work must lie in the delightfully dramatic conversations, crowded with wit, humour, and wisdom, and in the moral significance of the picture thus presented of a noble soul struggling with difficulties, moral and physical, a strong and affluent nature in which many infirmities were blended.

No one has ever reported conversations with a skill comparable to that of Boswell—a skill which appears marvellous when compared with the attempts of others; and although there may have been talkers as good as Johnson, no man's reported talk has the variety and force of his. The conversations of Goethe, reported by Eckermann, are no doubt the outpourings of a much greater mind and a much wider culture; but they are not properly to be accepted as conversations, they are incidental remarks and utterances intended for publication; they are fragments of monologues, not flashes of talk. In Boswell's pages we have the animation, the abruptness, the wandering and harkingback of conversation; the shuttlecock flies from battledore to battledore, and often drops between them; the mood, the whim, the prejudice of years suddenly gives place to the paradox of the moment; the rising laughter at the passing jest is arrested by striking the chord of some solemn conviction; the rising anger of contention disappears in some burst of laughter clearing the air. The very nonsense of these talks has its significance: it helps to paint the speakers and their time. And Johnson, though he towers above them all, is only the central figure of a remarkable group. We see him most distinctly; but we also get delightful glimpses of Burke and Reynolds, Garrick and Goldsmith, Topham Beauclerk and Bennet Langtonwith Boswell himself, a memorable figure, and pompous

Sir John Hawkins,—worthy of immortality, if not as witty himself, yet as the cause of wit in others, the subject of Goldsmith's irresistible epitaph:

"Here lies Sir John Hawkins, In his shoes and stawkings."

We hear these men talk, we hear them laugh, we see them flushing with anger or struggling to "get a word in." Then leaving the Club or Tavern we step with Johnson into the streets, and are touched on seeing the rough, rude, overbearing talker, reckless of wounding the susceptibilities of his associates, now full of tenderness for the unfortunate—relieving the beggars, although he knows they will spend the money on gin (for why should not these miserable creatures have their moments of pleasure?)—or raising a poor prostitute from the ground and carrying her on his back to his own home, there to have her tended. The man appears to us in so many aspects, and under all presents so much mind and so much heart, is so vigorous, massive, and tender that we learn to forget, or even love, his prejudices and asperities because they are his.

And this is the second source of inestimable value in such a picture as the life of Johnson presents. It helps to correct the vicious idealism of novelists and biographers,—an idealism which does not proceed by the selection and purification of typical truths, but by the suppression of the lasting facts of human nature and human life: an idealism which is afraid to paint goodness and greatness blended with evil and weakness, but will only paint in black and white. We are not loving evil and weakness when we love the good and great in spite of their infirmities. But the distinct recognition of serious defects in a character other-

wise dear and venerable to us, will help us to feel charitably towards the defects of others. The majority of mankind are so accustomed to judge of a character by some one. aspect of it, that they are puzzled and incredulous when they find a great name borne by some ill-favoured, wretchedlooking creature, "not in the least like their ideal"-or discover that some creative genius holds "very mistaken opinions" on a subject they profess to understand-or hear that the conduct of the hero has, on some particular occasion, been very unheroic—as if this blending of light and darkness were not the everyday experience of all of Socrates is, and has been for twenty centuries, reverenced among the great teachers and martyrs. But of the thousands who delight to honour his name how many would have honoured the man? how many would have seen any divine significance in that ugly, unimposing figure loafing about the Agora, and teaching new disreputable doctrines? again, how many of those who have a distinct vision of the contrast between the aspect presented by Socrates, and the "ideal" foolishly demanded, would distrust their impressions if another Socrates were now in their company?

It is Boswell's eternal merit to have deeply reverenced the man whose littlenesses and asperities he could keenly discern, and has courageously depicted; and his work stands almost alone in Biography because he had this vision and this courage. The image of Johnson is not defaced by these revelations, it only becomes more intelligible in becoming more human.

My notion of rewriting Boswell was, therefore, to preserve all that constitutes the essential merits of his work, and merely to adapt it to the more exigent tastes of our day. It was a notion caressed from time to time, but not

leading me to make any preparation for carrying it out. The truth is, that scientific pursuits absorbed all my energy, and left me neither time nor strength to turn to Literature. Year by year the probability of ever finding the requisite leisure grew less and less; and finally the scheme was abandoned. It was, however, to be revived in another mind. In the course of correspondence with Mr. Main, I suggested the scheme to him as one he might possibly feel disposed to adopt. He at once saw it to be feasible—and the work which these few lines are meant to introduce was executed entirely by him, with no more help from me than the brief explanation of my notion conveyed to him in a single letter. The whole merit of the work, therefore, must be given to Mr. Main.

GEORGE HENRY LEWES.

October, 1873.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

1	P	٨	G	E

PARENTAGE—SCHOOL DAYS.

(1709-1726.)

CHAPTER II.

REPOSE-AT COLLEGE-ON THE WORLD.

(1726—1734.)

Waiting—At Pembroke College—Hypochondria—Johnson's Studies—
"Miserably Poor"—Story of the Shoes—Leaves College—Tries
Teaching—Visions of London—His Birmingham Friend . . . 9—16

CHAPTER III.

MARRIED—OFF TO LONDON—EARLY STRUGGLES.

(1734—1740.)

CHAPTER IV.

STILL STRUGGLING—LITERARY HACK-WORK—" LIFE OF SAVAGE."
(1740—1744.)

CONTENT

v	٠,	•
^	v	

CHAPTER V.

THE WORST OVER-DICTIONARY BEGUN-"IRENE" ON THE STAGE.

(1745—1749.)

PAGE

A Prologue—Dictionary Begun—At Work—Excursion to Tunbridge Wells—"Vanity of Human Wishes"—"Irene" on the Boards—
Johnson in Full Dress—"Irene"—Its Moral Significance . . 34—40

CHAPTER VI.

"THE RAMBLER"-JOHNSON'S STYLE-HIS WIFE'S DEATH.

(1750—1752.)

CHAPTER VII.

JOHNSON'S HOUSEHOLD-HIS FRIENDS-VISIT TO OXFORD.

(1752-1754.)

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHNSON AND THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD—M.A.—DICTIONARY PUBLISHED.

(1754—1755.)

Letter to Chesterfield—Brains versus Blood—Manifestation of Feeling— How the Letter affected Chesterfield—Johnson on the Earl—Another attempt to procure an M.A.—Successful this Time—Dictionary Announced—Letter to Bennet Langton—Note of Melancholy . 63—73

CHAPTER IX.

MORE ABOUT THE DICTIONARY-LETTERS-"THE IDLER."

(1755 - 1758.)

Characteristic Definitions—Garrick's Critique on the Dictionary—Resolutions—Money all Gone—"The Universal Review"—Offered a

C	\sim	7	7	C :	7	7	70
L	UI	Y.		31	v	1	٠.

xvii

Benefice—Letter to Burney—Letter to Langton—Another Letter to Burney—Burney Visits our Author at Home—"The Idler"—Letters to Warton and Langton—Letter of Sympathy
CHAPTER X.
HIS MOTHER'S DEATH-" RASSELAS"-HIS NEGRO SERVANT.
(1759—1760.)
Letters to his Dying Mother—His Mother's DeathJohnson's Grief— "Rasselas"—Francis Barber—Resolutions—Dedications—Letter to Langton—Johnson not an Idle Man 89—97
CHAPTER XI.
LETTERS-JOHNSON A PENSIONER-BOSWELL INTRODUCED.
. (1760—1763.)
A Model Letter—Letter to Baretti—Pensioned—A Friendly Dispute— Letter of Thanks—Visit to Devonshire—Boswell Introduced—Scene Described—Second Meeting—Talk—Boswell—"A Man's a Man" 98-108

CHAPTER XII.

CONVERSATIONS-AT TEA WITH MRS. WILLIAMS.

(1763.)

Johnson's Talk—An Angry Irishman—On the Poet Gray—On Ghosts—Sale of the "Vicar of Wakefield"—A Tea-party—"The King can do no Wrong"—"Let us not talk of the Weather"—Evidences of Christianity—Johnson's Jacobitism—A Ferocious Scotchman—Boswell has a Headache

CHAPTER XIII.

CONVERSATIONS—"ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE."
(1763.)

xviii

CHAPTER XIV.

TRIP TO GREENWICH—THE DOCTOR AT SUPPER—PARTING WITH BOSWELL.

(1763.)

CHAPTER XV.

LITERARY CLUB FOUNDED—HYPOCHONDRIA—JOHNSON'S "SHAKE-SPEARE"—INTRODUCTION TO THE THRALES.

(1764-1765).

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DOCTOR AN ABSTAINER—CONVERSATIONS—INTERVIEW WITH THE KING.

(1766—1767.)

Change in the Doctor's way of Life—Johnson on Rousseau—Talk—Self-defence—Letters to Langton—Mrs. Williams's Miscellanies—A Burlesque—Interview with the King—Time's Revenges . . . 142—152

CHAPTER XVII.

AT LICHFIELD—A TENDER ADIEU—CONVERSATIONS—DR. PERCY SNUBBED.

(1767—1768.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONVERSATIONS—GENERAL PAOLI INTRODUCED—BOSWELL AN OFFENDER—JOHNSON'S "PECCAVL"

(1769.)

Johnson on Savage Life—On Marriage—On Scotch Gardeners—"Most Exquisite Fooling!"—The Corsican Patriot Introduced—A true Johnsonian Retort—Genius in Undress—Johnson on Shakespeare and Congreve—Johnson versus Shakespeare—On Sentimentality—Talk about Death—The Doctor Enraged—Johnson's way of Apologizing 162—172

CHAPTER XIX.

NEGRO FRANCIS AT SCHOOL—PROPOSAL TO ENTER PARLIA-MENT—MEDITATIONS ON EARLY RISING.

(1769—1771.)

CHAPTER XX.

CONVERSATIONS—JOHNSON ON GOLDSMITH—SILENT SORROWS.

(1772.)

Boswell deputed to buy St. Kilda—Johnson on Mimicry—On Hospitality
—The Doctor's pistol misses fire—On Goldsmith—A Flea and a Lion
—A Scotchman caught young—On Luxury—Silent Sorrows . 180—189

CHAPTER XXI.

BOSWELL DINES WITH THE DOCTOR AT HOME—CONVERSA-TIONS—GOLDSMITH—DE PROFUNDIS.

(1773.)

CHAPTER XXII.

GARRICK A MEMBER OF THE CLUB—THE DOCTOR ON THE SCOTCH—DEBATE ON TOLERATION—EPISODE.

(1773.)

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MEMORABLE LAUGH—TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES—DEATH OF GOLDSMITH—TOUR IN WALES.

(1773-1774.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

OSSIAN-MACPHERSON—THE DOCTOR'S COURAGE—"TAXATION NO TYRANNY."

(1774-1775.)

CHAPTER XXV.

CONVERSATIONS—A FINE SCENE—JOHNSON AT THE THEATRE
—LLD.

(1775.)

A little bit of Acting—Johnson on Sheridan—A fine little Scene—Johnson at the Theatre—A Heavy Blow—The Doctor and his Orange-peels—LL.D.—Faith will out—Johnson's horror of a Superannuated Life—Defence of Charles the Second—A Sheba-like Visit—"Pennant tells of Bears"—A heresy!—Talk on Various Subjects—Johnson fit for all Conversational Emergencies 234—244

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SACRED DAY—CONVERSATIONS—LETTERS.

(1775.)

The Doctor's Fastings—A Holy Time—Talk—Johnson's Life of Life—A Good-humoured Fellow—A Pleasant Visit—Johnson's Extraordinary Conversational Readiness—A Finer Element—Letters to Boswell—The Doctor "Chaffs" Mrs. Boswell

CHAPTER XXVII.

TOUR IN FRANCE-NOTES FROM THE DOCTOR'S DIARY-TABLEAU.

(1775.)

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VISIT TO OXFORD—THE DOCTOR AND HIS WIGS—CONVERSATIONS
—EULOGY ON INNS.

(1776.)

Boswell again in London—The Doctor's Truthfulness—Journey to Oxford
—Talk—The Doctor and his Wigs—Visit to Dr. Adams—Jostling
down—Talk—Eulogy on Inns—At Henley 263—271

CHAPTER XXIX.

JOHNSON VISITS HIS NATIVE DISTRICT—CONVERSATIONS—THE DOCTOR AND AN OLD SCHOOL-MATE.

(1776.)

CHAPTER XXX.

JOHNSON'S DELICACY—CONVERSATIONS—THE DOCTOR AND MADAME DE BOUFFLERS—"ROWLEY'S POEMS."

(1776.)

CHAPTER XXXI.

A MOMENTOUS NEGOTIATION—THE DOCTOR AND JOHN WILKES— POLITICS ROUTED BY POLITENESS.

(1776.)

CHAPTER XXXII.

DR. BOSWELL'S EPIGRAM—ROUND ROBIN—LETTERS—HOURS OF GLOOM.

(1776-1777.)

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DR. JOHNSON AND DR. DODD—LETTERS—PROPOSED "LITTLE ADVENTURE."

(1777.)

CHAPTER XXXIV.

VISIT TO ASHBOURNE—TWO DOCTORS—CONVERSATIONS—JOHNSON'S BIRTHDAY.

(1777.)

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN ODD FAMILY-CONVERSATIONS-A DRAMATIC EVENING.

(1777-1778.)

Letters—An Addition to the Doctor's Family—A Quaint Group—Good Advice—A Noble Judgment—The Doctor Silent and Sulky—"Nobody is Content"—A Smart Quotation—In Praise of Goldsmith—Defence of Garrick—A Dramatic Evening—Quarrel and Reconciliation.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

JOHNSON'S BEFORE-DINNER TALK—CONVERSATIONS—THE DOCTOR AND AN OLD COLLEGE-MATE.

(1778.)

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN AMUSING FAREWELL—"LIVES OF THE POETS"—A PARSON-POET—QUARREL AND RECONCILIATION.

(1778 - 1779.)

Wounded and Healed Again—An Amusing Farewell—A Doleful Letter—More Letters—"Lives of the Poets"—Death of Garrick—Noble Praise—A Novel Scene—Johnson's Scale of Liquors—Quarrel with Beauclerk—Reconciliation—Plea for Imperfect Men . . . 352—362

xxiv

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONVERSATIONS—THE DOCTOR AND THE LADIES—DEATH OF BEAUCLERK—SELF-ABASEMENT.

(1779-1780).

DACE

Letters—"Let us breakfast in splendour"—The Doctor Hob-nobbing with a Lady—Delicious Complimenting—A Deferential Nobleman—
"The Ambassador says well"—Letters—Death of Beauclerk—Letter to Boswell—Letters on behalf of Needy Friends—Self-abasement 363—375

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"LIVES OF THE POETS" CONCLUDED—CHARACTERISTIC LETTER—
THE DOCIOR AN EXECUTOR—CONVERSATIONS.

(1781.)

CHAPTER XL.

JOHNSON REVISITS SCENES OF YOUTH—DEATH OF MR. LEVETT— ELEGY—SICK AT HEART.

(1781 - 1782.)

CHAPTER XLI.

ILL AND ILL-TEMPERED—CONVERSATIONS—STRUCK DUMB—DEATH OF MRS. WILLIAMS.

(1783.)

CHAPTER XLII.

A DESOLATED HOME-NEW CLUB FOUNDED-" A PIOUS NEGO-TIATION "-ANOTHER FAREWELL

(1783 - 1784)

PAGE

CHAPTER XLIII. .

CONVERSATIONS-MIND CLEAR TO THE LAST-VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

(1784.)

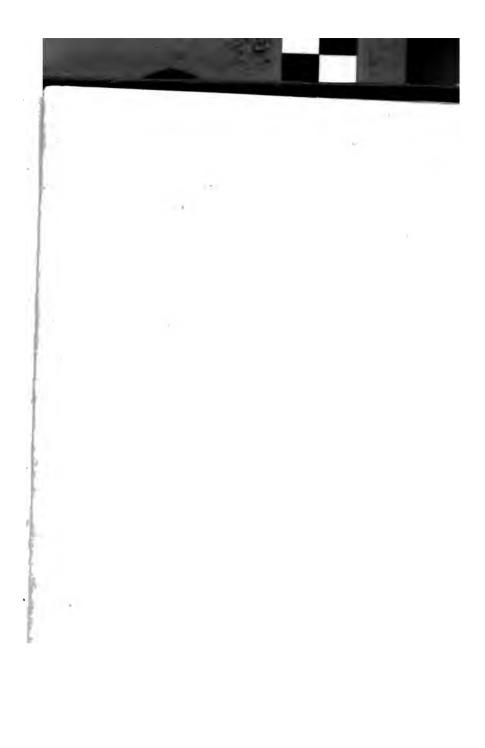
Talk Grand as Ever—Generous Estimate of Burke—Three Simple Words
— "Let me alone, Let me alone"—The Shadow of Death—Visit to
an Old Acquaintance—A Young Gentleman Snubbed—Johnson's
Defence of his own Manner—Noble Deliverance of Burke's . 423—429

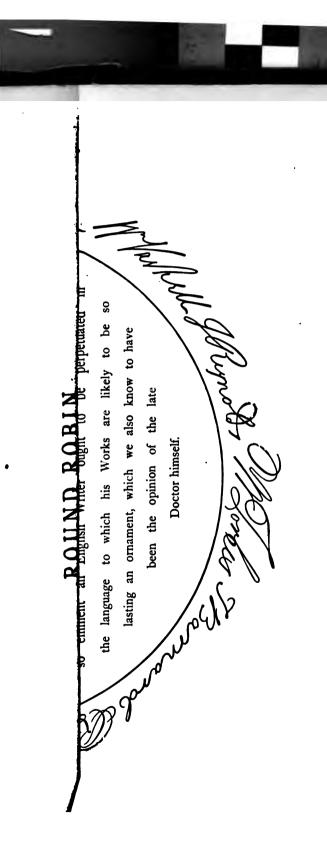
CHAPTER XLIV.

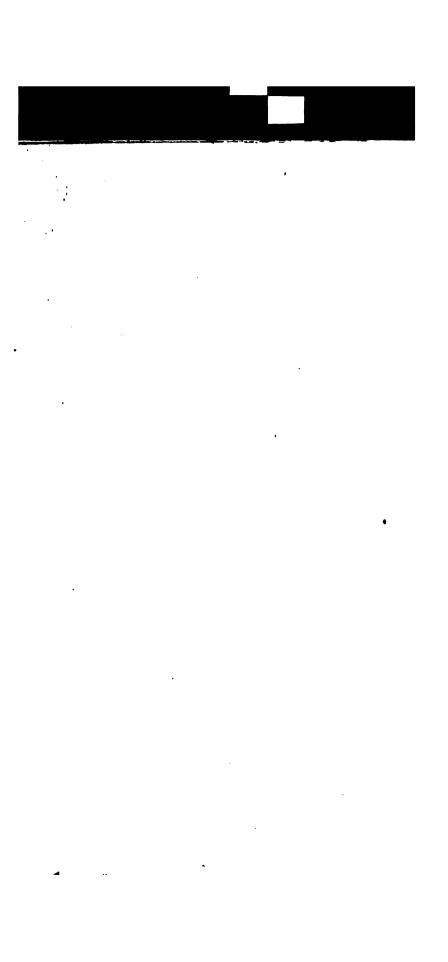
THE DOCTOR'S LAST VISIT TO HIS NATIVE DISTRICT-RETURN TO LONDON-DEATH-BED-SCENE CLOSED.

(1784.)

A Mournful Duty Discharged—The Doctor's Last Visit to Lichfield—"I Struggle hard for Life"—" Who can Run the Race with Death?"—
"A Narrative of Misery"—" Live on and Hope"—A Memorable







LIFE AND CONVERSATIONS

ΟF

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE-SCHOOL-DAYS

(1709—1726).

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, on the 18th of September, 1709. His parents were Michael Johnson, a native of Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, and Sarah Ford, descended from an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire. The following romantic but well-authenticated circumstance in Michael Johnson's early life is worth recording. While he was serving his apprenticeship at Leek, in Staffordshire, a young woman fell passionately in love with him. Although the affection was not returned she followed him to Lichfield, where he had settled as a bookseller and stationer, and took lodgings opposite to the house in which he stayed. When told that the young woman's mind was beginning to give way under the weight of this unrequited affection, Michael generously went to her and made her an offer of marriage; but it was too late. She adually died of love. She was buried in the cathedral of Lichfield; and he, with tender regard, placed a stone over her grave with this inscription:-

HERE LIES THE BODY OF

MRS. ELIZABETH BLANEY, a Stranger:

She departed this Life 20th of September, 1694.

What pathos, and how many sad and kindly regrets, would seem to have got crowded into the two simple words—"a stranger!" Michael Johnson was a man of large and robust body, and of a mind to match; but there must have been tender fibres in his heart as well; for no one can call forth so much love as this without giving forth much that is loveable. Notwithstanding the tragic result in the young woman's case, it is pleasant to be able to record a little incident like that in the career of the father of a man who is mistakenly supposed to have had but few soft places in his own heart.

Michael, though he may be said to have had his most fixed abode at Lichfield, made occasional visits, in the way of business, to several towns in the neighbourhood. In Birmingham, for example, he used to set up a stall on every market-day; for, out of London, booksellers' shops were few and far between in those days. Old Mr. Johnson thus became pretty widely known, and wherever he was known he was respected highly. Here is an extract from a letter written by Lord Gower's chaplain, and dated "Trentham, St. Pater's Day, 1716":—

"Johnson, the Lichfield librarian, is now here; he propagates learning all over this diocese, and advanceth knowledge to its just height; all the clergy here are his pupils, and suck all they have from him." This was as it should have been with the father of a man like Samuel Johnson, who inherited not only the strong liking for books but also the desire and the power to spread his knowledge of them abroad. The son's public was destined to be a far larger one, but perhaps it has scarcely proved more enthusiastic or more grateful, than that for which the father worked.

Johnson's mother appears to have been a sensible and pious woman, but not at all bookish. One of Samuel's schoolfellows, when asked if she was not vain of her son, said, "She had too

much good sense to be vain, but she knew her son's value." And as regards her piety, Johnson himself once mentioned that he remembered distinctly hearing his mother tell him, when a little child in bed with her, that Heaven was "a place to which good people went," and Hell "a place to which bad people went." This was the first time he had ever heard of either; and, to fix the information the better in his memory, she had sent the child to repeat what she had told him to Thomas Jackson, their man-servant. Much of what afterwards shot up in various forms in Johnson's later life must have had its seed-time in those bedroom instructions whispered to the child Samuel in the silence of the night.

Notwithstanding the sterling qualities of both parents they do not seem to have worked very well together. "My father and mother," says Johnson, "had not much happiness from each They seldom conversed: for my father could not bear to talk of his affairs; and my mother, being unacquainted with books, cared not to talk of anything else. Had my mother been more literate, they had been better companions. She might have sometimes introduced her unwelcome topic with more success, if she could have diversified her conversation. Of business she had no distinct conception; and therefore her discourse was composed only of complaint, fear, and suspicion. Neither of them ever tried to calculate the profits of trade or the expenses of living. My mother concluded that we were poor, because we lost by some of our trades; but the truth was, that my father having in the early part of his life contracted debts, never had trade sufficient to enable him to pay them, and to maintain his family; he got something, but not enough. It was not till about 1768, that I thought to calculate the returns of my father's trade, and, by that estimate, his probable profits. This I believe my parents never did."

Johnson, in his youth, was much afflicted with the scrofula or king's evil, a distemper which he is absurdly said to have caught from his nurse. This disease had at one time rendered him almost blind; and for many years one of his eyes remained quite useless, though there was nothing peculiar about its appearance to

mark the fact. Among his "Prayers and Meditations" there is one inscribed, "When my EYE was restored to its use," thus indicating a defect which the very closest scrutiny would have failed to perceive. He was near-sighted, but by no means dull-sighted, all his life. At the age of thirty months he had been taken to London to be touched for the evil by Queen Anne: Boswell naïvely remarks that "the touch was of no effect." Being asked, in after life, if he remembered the Queen, Johnson said "he had a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn, recollection of a lady in diamonds and a long black hood." It must not be forgotten that he wanted six months of being three years old at this period. Few persons, we should think, can see any object standing out as distinctly so far along "the dark backward and abysm of time."

Johnson's first place of instruction was a Dame School taught by a widow named Oliver. A servant used to be sent to school to conduct him safely home; but one day it happened that the attendant did not arrive in time, so that Samuel had to set out on his return journey alone. The schoolmistress, however, followed him at a distance, keeping him in view all the way. culties of the march were by no means contemptible; for the little fellow was then so short-sighted that he had to stoop down on his hands and knees to see the kennel before he dared venture to step over it. Yet he strode manfully forward, until, happening to turn round, he observed the Dame dogging him in the rear. This was a slight upon his power of self-government which was not to be borne: he ran back and beat her fiercely with his puny little fists. This stern determination to go alone, and this tendency to beat people who should offend him, remained as master-principles throughout all his future life; so true is it that

" Childhood shows the man As morning shows the day."

His next teacher was a master, whom he used familiarly to style Tom Brown, adding, "he published a spelling book, and dedicated it to the Universe; but I fear no copy of it can now be had:" reminding one of the work which some French author had dedicated to Posterity, and of which Voltaire quietly remarked that it was "a letter which would never be delivered."

He learned his first Latin with Mr. Hawkins, usher of Lichfield school; "a man," he said, "very skilful in his little way." Two years afterwards he passed into the hands of Mr. Hunter, the head-master, who, according to Johnson's own account, "was very severe, and wrongheadedly severe. He used," said he, "to beat us unmercifully; and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence; for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it. He would ask a boy a question, and if he did not answer it, he would beat him, without considering whether he had an opportunity of knowing how to answer it. For instance, he would call up a boy and ask him Latin for a candlestick, which the boy could not expect to be asked. Now, sir, if a boy could answer every question, there would be no need of a master to teach him." But Hunter was a good Latin scholar, and Johnson was obliged to confess that his severity was often needed in his own case. "My master whipt me very well. Without that, sir, I should have done nothing." With every thrash of the cane, moreover, there came thundering down on the cowering victim's head the terrible words, "And this I do to save you from the gallows." Who knows, then, if, but for the stern Hunter's many floggings, this most distinguished pupil of his might not even now have been figuring in the Newgate Calendar, instead of on the pages of classic literature? But Hunter had reason to be proud of his scholar; for Johnson was the undisputed intellectual monarch of the Institution. pupils also readily acknowledged this supremacy; so much so that three faithful slaves used to come of a morning and carry him to school.—which was no joke, as the future Doctor was already beginning to give no uncertain signs of the renowned bulk of body that was to be. He engaged very little in the ordinary sports of the boys, his only amusement being, in the winter-time, to be pulled along the ice with a string tied round his body and guided by a bare-footed lad running before him.

All this while the child's religious instruction had been faithfully and fondly, if not in every respect judiciously, superintended by his mother. "Sunday," says he, "was a heavy day to me when I was a boy. My mother confined me on that day, and made me

read 'The Whole Duty of Man,' from a great part of which I could derive no instruction. When, for instance, I had read the chapter on theft, which, from my infancy I had been taught was wrong, I was no more convinced that theft was wrong than before; so there was no accession of knowledge." He further adds, "I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The church at Lichfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation, so I was to go and find a seat in other churches; and having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year: I then became a sort of lax talker against religion, for I did not much think against it." But what Keats says of poetry is equally true of religion: the genius of religion must work out its own salvation in a man. And although this side of Johnson's nature would thus appear to have been, during his boyhood, developed less wisely and harmoniously than could have been desired, it ought not to be doubted, at the same time, that it was the great but simple truths instilled into his infant heart that kept the religious feeling alive in him through all his future life; and that was the one thing needful with him, as it is with us all. Here is a little extract from one of those diaries which he seems to have kept from his cradle almost. It is dated October, 1719, when he was a lad only ten years old :- "Desidiae valedixi; sirenis istius cantibus surdam posthac aurem obversurus." [I have said farewell to sloth, and mean henceforth to turn a deaf ear to her syren strains.] Such a manly little resolution from a mere child must have sprung from something quite as healthful and strong as any religious impulse could well be imagined to be.

After an interval spent at the house of a relative, Johnson was, at the age of fifteen, sent to Stourbridge school, in Worcestershire. Mr. Wentworth, the master, was, he said, "a very able man, but an idle man, and to me very severe; but I cannot blame him much. I was then a big boy; he saw I did not reverence him, and that he should get no honour by me. I had brought enough with me to carry me through; and all I should get at his school would be ascribed to my own labour, or to my former master. Yet he taught me a great deal." Of the difference in the kind of pro-

gress made at the two schools he himself used to speak thus: "At one, I learned much in the school, but little from the master; in the other, I learned much from the master, but little in the school."

In the midst of so much desultory occupation and idleness it would be indeed strange not to find some little love-makings on the part of our youthful Samuel. These were numerous about this time—many but transient. At Stourbridge school, for example, he had been caught by a certain Olivia Lloyd, a quaker young lady, to whom he addressed a copy of verses. The verses have been lost, but they doubtless did their work upon the fair one's heart. In default of the missing love-lay take the following, written later, but presumably very much of a piece with the lost strains:—

Verses to a Lady, on receiving from her a Sprig of Myrtle.

"What hopes, what terrors does thy gift create, Ambiguous emblem of uncertain fate! The myrtle, ensign of supreme command, Consign'd by Venus to Melissa's hand; Not less capricious than a reigning fair, Now grants, and now rejects a lover's prayer. In myrtle shades oft sings the happy swain, In myrtle shades despairing ghosts complain; The myrtle crowns the happy lovers' heads, The unhappy lover's grave the myrtle spreads; Oh, then, the meaning of thy gift impart, And ease the throbbings of an anxious heart! Soon must this bough, as you shall fix his doom, Adorn Philander's head, or grace his tomb."

Verses like these would not, it is to be feared, kindle any very ecstatic raptures in the breasts of most of the young ladies of our time; nevertheless we must try to do them justice. The day of Philanders and Melissas has gone for ever; but it was a good day enough so long as it lasted, and for the men and women who lived in it. Our love-poetry, indeed, moves to a very different music, fired with the lyric passion of Burns, or beating with Shelley's heart-throbs too mighty for words to express. Yet,

although we vastly prefer our own, and ourselves for being able to appreciate it, "would it not be rash to conclude that there was NO passion behind those sonnets to Delia which strike us as the thin music of a mandolin?" The poets of Johnson's time, himself included, seem to have been able to play with a feeling which quite masters us; yet they played with it fondly, and kindly, and tenderly, and as if they even reverenced it too, in their own way. All things are not given to every man, nor to every age.

Johnson had now reached his seventeenth year, when he left school for ever, and returned home to Lichfield.

The picture of young Samuel during these early school-days is that of a lad of rough but strong-built frame; with a countenance not naturally uncomely, but disfigured by disease; with sharp though near-sighted eyes, and a rather ungainly manner and appearance; reading voraciously all sorts of books, but feeding chiefly in the fields of chivalrous romance and poetry; poring over "Hamlet" in his own little room until the ghost-scene frightens him off to bed; neglecting his proper work to do the exercises of his fellow-pupils; sauntering away the vacation-hours in the fields, with a companion or without; and always talking. talking, oftener to himself than to his companions; seldom or never punished by his masters except for talking and distracting the attention of his neighbours; learning without the slightest difficulty what costs others a world of labour; doing his own work so easily that he often seems to others, and even to himself, to be doing nothing at all; wearing both his powers and his clothes so loosely that he can shuffle them off and on without any tugging or straining; ambitious to excel, yet too indolent to exert his full energies except by starts; always desultory, yet always storing up; letting long spells of work alternate with strong fits of idleness, but laying a sure foundation all the while for the massive superstructure of his after-life: a lad in whom a good eve can discern the makings of a great man; for "the Man is only the Boy writ large, and with an extensive commentary."

CHAPTER II.

REPOSE-AT COLLEGE-ON THE WORLD.

(1726-1734).

AFTER his return from Stourbridge school Johnson spent two years at home, in comparative idleness, which was nevertheless fruitful. He read a great deal in an irregular sort of way, but, having formed no settled plan of life, his studies were naturally desultory and unsystematic. His reading was not confined to "light literature," as it is called, "not voyages and travels, but all literature, sir, all ancient writers, all manly." In after days he was wont to speak of this period of his life as a deplorably idle and barren one; yet he generally concluded his account by saying, "I would not have you think I was doing nothing then." And the truth is, he was doing much; he was amassing riches which were afterwards to be scattered abroad; he was storing up food against the coming hours of famine and distress. cient unto the day is the evil thereof"—and the good. truth of this maxim Samuel Johnson reposed for the space of two whole years. And it is good to lie by in this way till the call make itself distinctly heard. These quiet listening years are not time misspent; for-

"They also serve, who only stand and wait."

At the age of nineteen he left Lichfield for Oxford University, and was entered a commoner of Pembroke College on the 31st of October, 1728. Just before leaving home, his old schoolmistress, Dame Oliver, hearing that he was about to take his departure, had paid him a farewell visit, and, in the simplicity of her heart, had brought him a present of gingerbread as the fittest

token of goodwill which she could think of. In after years, Johnson was fond of retailing this little incident, and used laughingly to say "that this was as high a proof of his merit as he could have received." His father accompanied him to Oxford, and, in presenting his son to the University Magnates, was loud in the praises of his boy. Johnson's figure and manner, indeed, occasioned some surprise; but his modesty and respectful behaviour in their presence made a favourable impression on the company. In the course of conversation, also, he had an opportunity of evidencing the great amount of his reading; and Doctor Adams, the Master of the College, afterwards told him that he was "the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there."

Of his tutor here, Mr. Jorden, he once gave the following account:—"He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man, and I did not profit much by his instructions. Indeed, I did not attend him much. The first day after I came to college, I waited upon him, and then stayed away four. On the sixth, Mr. Jorden asked me why I had not attended. I answered, I had been sliding in Christ-Church meadow: and this I said with as much nonchalance as I am now talking to you. I had no notion that I was wrong or irreverent to my tutor." Boswell: "That, sir, was great fortitude of mind." Johnson: "No, sir, stark insensibility."

But if Mr. Jorden's intellect did not inspire reverence in his pupil, his goodness of heart awoke in him true love. "Whenever," said Johnson, "a young man becomes Jorden's pupil, he becomes his son." And, perhaps, it is proper to direct attention thus early to the fact that Johnson had a blunt, honest, manly way of denouncing his own faults which is apt to mislead a hasty reader and to be taken as meaning too much. If there ever lived a man who is to be taken, not at his own valuation, but greatly above it, that man was Samuel Johnson. He was always his own severest critic; and such an one has very little to fear from the harsh judgments of others. More, perhaps, than any other feature of his character it is this constant and strict habit of self-castigation in matters pertaining to the conscience, that makes

it a species of grand moral training to follow him from the cradle on to the grave.

From his father Johnson had inherited, among other things, "a vile melancholy," which, to use his own exaggerated words, "made him mad all his life, at least not sober." In his twentieth year, during the Oxford recess of 1729, this demon of hypochondria assailed him with dreadful ferocity. He tried to exorcise the evil spirit by hard walking, to Birmingham and back again, for instance; and by a hundred other expedients. But all to no purpose; as he himself says, "I did not then know how to manage it." Sometimes, when the disease was most violent, he became so listless, and so utterly dispirited, and so intellectually vacuous, that he could not even distinguish the hour upon the town-clock. Several of his friends feared that this trouble might prove the oncoming of actual insanity; and his own morbid imagination took up the dread only too readily. It never resulted in that; but he suffered periodical attacks of the same distemper during all the rest of his life.

It was during this college-period also that, according to his own account, the first serious and rational impressions upon religious subjects were made on his mind:—"When at Oxford, I took up 'Law's Serious Call to a Holy Life,' expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry."

About his particular studies at Oxford not much is known. What he read solidly there was, he tells us, "Greek; not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little Epigram;" what he was fondest of was Metaphysics, but he does not lay claim to having gone very profoundly into that branch of mental culture. The truth is, he hardly ever read any book from beginning to end; but he had a gift, by no means common, of getting at the soul of a work very easily and very soon. He would suck the marrow out of a book "as a weasel sucks eggs." All that was really valuable in the literature that came before him he thus made his own, and, having once

mastered it, it was his for ever. That in a book which he could live upon he "devoured." His passion for acquiring knowledge was insatiable. One day, at Oxford, while sitting alone in his room, he was overheard muttering this soliloquy in his strong emphatic voice: "Well, I have a mind to see what is done in other places of learning. I'll go and visit the universities abroad. I'll go to France and Italy. I'll go to Padua.—And I'll mind my business. For an Athenian blockhead is the worst of all blockheads."

But these visions of world-wide travel were all a dream, for Johnson was, at that very moment, finding it almost impossible to maintain himself longer here at Oxford. Under such circumstances, we shall not grudge the poor fellow his pleasing illusion, for—

" The miserable have no other medicine But only hope."

His wretchedness, too, was of that worst of all kinds which finds itself forced to look gay and happy. When told in after years that Doctor Adams had spoken of him as "a gay and frolicksome fellow at College," he said, "Ah, sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority."

We have all heard laughter with no true ring of fun in it, and seen wild revelry which had its source far on the other side of mirth. Poor Johnson's laughter and revelry were, just then, of this truly pitiable sort. Some of his Oxford contemporaries used to relate that "he was generally seen lounging at the college-gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with his wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the college discipline." So the Oxford Student is but the Stourbridge Schoolboy of a larger growth, with one or two new elements of bitterness and desperation which untoward circumstances have developed in his character.

The following anecdote will give a clear idea, but a sad one,

of the straits to which young Johnson was reduced about this Belonging to Christ-Church College there was a tutor whose lectures Samuel prized very highly. These he used to get at second-hand from a friend of his who attended that college. But his shoes became so worn that his feet began to show through them; and when he saw that this was perceived, and no doubt commented upon, by the Christ-Church men, his visits to his friend at once ceased. He was too proud to accept of money; and when some fellow-student, with a delicacy which did his heart honour, placed a pair of new shoes at Johnson's roomdoor, he indignantly threw them away. This act of our hero's has been blamed by some, praised by others; some have set it down as springing from surly ingratitude, others as arising from a quite proper pride. For our own part, we prefer not to give it a name at all; but choose rather to quote the following lines from one of Robert Burns's famous poems as most fitly characterising both man and motive :--

"Is there for honest poverty
That hangs his head and a' that?
The coward-slave, we pass him by—
WE DARE BE POOR FOR A' THAT."

And if, with Samuel Johnson, this pride of "honest poverty" meant a resolute determination to stand, not only on his own feet, but also in his own boots, we can easily understand, and may readily forgive, his angry impulse to pitch the well-intended gift downstairs. Had he found the giver at the door, and sent him headlong after his own present, cavillers might have had some reason to complain.

In the year 1731, his father became bankrupt; and the remittances from home, which had all along been scanty, now entirely ceased. He was compelled, therefore, to return to Lichfield without a degree, having attended the University for somewhat over three years. In the December of this same year his father died, at the age of seventy-six. The following note in one of Samuel's diaries, dated 15th July, 1732, will give some idea of the state of poverty in which his parent left the world:—"I laid by

eleven guineas on this day, when I received twenty pounds, being all that I have reason to hope for out of my father's effects, previous to the death of my mother; an event which I pray God may be very remote. I now, therefore, see that I must make my own fortune. Meanwhile, let me take care that the powers of my mind be not debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any criminal act."

Take courage, brave, manly, honest heart; failure there can be none for such as you. A place is preparing for you in the Great City, and you have been preparing for it by this long stern discipline of sufferings nobly borne and sorrows told only to yourself—and One Other.

At that moment, however, having little or no choice, he had taken a situation as usher in the school of Market-Bosworth; whither he set out on foot next day, as appears from the following notice in his diary: "Julii 16, 1732, Bosvortiam pedes petii." He did not like the work. He once wrote to a friend, "that the poet had described the dull sameness of his existence in these words, 'Vitam continet una dies' (one day contains the whole of my life); that it was unvaried as the note of the cuckoo; and that he did not know whether it was more disagreeable for him to teach, or the boys to learn, the grammar rules."

The work was not for him, and he was not for the work. The situation was rendered still more unbearable by the harsh treatment he experienced at the hands of the patron of the school, in whose house he seems to have officiated as a kind of domestic chaplain; at least, he said the grace at table, though with feelings burning underneath which were very far from gracious. He threw up the school after a few months' trial; but its name was ever afterwards associated in his memory with feelings of intense bitterness, and even of horror.

The next two years of Johnson's life were spent in Birming-ham—the first six months at the house of an intimate friend and old schoolfellow, the rest of the time in hired lodgings. With no settled plan for the present, and no clear prospect in the future, he thought himself as well situated here as he could have been

anywhere else. What he wrote at this period, or whether it brought him any money-supplies, has not been well ascertained. One piece of literary labour he certainly performed; and it is worth mentioning, if only because it was his first work in prose. It was a translation from the French into the English of a book called "A Voyage to Abyssinia, by Lobo, a Portuguese Jesuit." He was not in very good health at the time, and his constitutional indolence was in full flower. But he was prevailed upon to translate as he lay in bed, while a friend wrote to his dictation. little bit of work brought him in five guineas. Perhaps, also, another little bit of work may have been done as he lay on that bed with the Abyssinian quarto before his eyes; a tiny seed of the future "Rasselas" may have fallen into his soul in some quiet moment of which memory would take no note.

Visions of London, which were always visions of hope in those days and to such men, had often flitted in Johnson's imagination; but at Birmingham he fell in with a man who could give some degree of fixity to his otherwise wild and bewildering expectations. This was an Irish painter, who had been several years in the Metropolis, and had found it necessary all the time to practise that strict economy which life had made no stranger to our young literary enthusiast. Many a talk the two must have had together about the ways and means of "roughing it" in the mighty city; talk sometimes grave, often gay, generally cheerful. The painter would impart, and Johnson would gladly hear, such useful information as this: "Thirty pounds a year are enough to enable a man to live in London without being contemptible. I allow ten pounds for clothes and linen. You may live in a garret at eighteen-pence a week; few people will inquire where you lodge; and if they do, it is easy to say, 'Sir, I am to be found at such a place.' spending threepence in a coffee-house you may be for some hours every day in very good company; you may dine for sixpence, breakfast on bread and cheese for a penny, and do without supper. On clean-shirt day you go abroad and pay visits." Thus the two friends sit discoursing and discussing the "Art of Living in London;" while Johnson's Destiny, unseen the while, is making ready that which will change doubt into determination, vague hopes into a stern resolve to test their value, the London of dreams into the London of fact—in which his fame is to be won, his work to be done, and his strong and tender and manly heart at last stilled to rest.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will."

CHAPTER III.

MARRIED-OFF TO LONDON-EARLY STRUGGLES.

(1734—1740.)

THE ninth of July, 1734, was a memorable day in the history of the young scholar; for on that day he was married. The woman of his choice was Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a widow, with whom he had become acquainted about three years before the above date. Her age was nearly double that of her husband, and, if Garrick is to be believed, her personal attractions must have been somewhat limited. The wag used to describe the lady as "very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with swelled cheeks, of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials; flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and her general behaviour." This portrait must doubtless be taken as more than slightly caricatured; but, in any case, the bridegroom himself seems to have thought his spouse handsome, if we may judge from a little circumstance which will be set down in its proper place. Besides, we must not forget that Johnson knew nothing, and thought nothing, of that Ideal Beauty which puts us nineteenth-century lovers in such ecstasies; he was all his life long the sternest of Realists, and no doubt found in his wife what he had chiefly desired:

> " A creature not too bright or good For human nature's daily food."

What the poor student required was a wife who should acquit herself well on the working-days, and not one, as Beatrice says, "too costly to wear every day." Moreover, Johnson's own ap pearance was far from prepossessing about this period of his life. Here is the portrait of the lover when paying his first visit to his future bride: lean, lank, and hideously bony; the scrofulous scars deeply visible in his face; his hair straight and stiff, and separated behind; and the whole accompanied by convulsive starts and odd gesticulations. These "convulsive starts and odd gesticulations" occasioned surprise to all who ever knew Johnson, and have been differently accounted for by different persons. imagined them to be an actual disease, of the St. Vitus-dance order; Sir Joshua Reynolds, on the other hand, an acute observer, attributed them to bad habit. "He could sit motionless," says Reynolds, "when he was told so to do, as well as any other man." According to this view, Johnson's extraordinary motions were peculiar effects resulting from absence of mind and an awkward custom of accompanying his thoughts, when alone, with untoward actions. We give the following illustrative anecdote in Sir Joshua's own words: "When he and I took a journey together into the West, we visited the late Mr. Banks, of Dorsetshire; the conversation turning upon pictures, which Johnson could not well see, he retired to a corner of the room, stretching out his right leg as far as he could reach before him, then bringing up his left leg, and stretching his right still further on. The old gentleman observing him, went up to him and in a very courteous manner assured him, though it was not a new house, the flooring was perfectly safe. The Doctor started from his reverie, like a person waked out of his sleep, but spoke not a word."

Hogarth first met Johnson at the house of Richardson, author of "Pamela," &c. •While Hogarth and the novelist were talking, the former observed a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange ridiculous manner. He thought the fellow must be a born idiot; but the moment the stranger struck into the conversation, Hogarth began to change his mind and to judge that he was at least an idiot inspired.

Johnson himself seems to have set the surprising contortions down to the influence of overmastering use and wont. For, when a young girl once ventured to ask him, "Pray, Dr. Johnson, why do you make such strange gestures?" he replied, "From bad habit. Do you, my dear, take care to guard against bad habits."

But it reflects infinite credit upon the lady's intellect and heart that she looked right through all this ungainly exterior into the man's great soul; that she saw her future husband's "visage in his mind;" and, on his departure, said to her daughter, "This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life."

Johnson had paid a special visit to Lichfield to ask his aged mother's consent to the marriage, which he must have felt to be an imprudent one, in his present circumstances. The old woman loved her son too fondly, and also knew too well his firmness of character (call it stubbornness in this case, if you will) to protest; so she gave her consent and her blessing.

For some mysterious reason, known only to themselves, the loving pair had determined to be married, not at Birmingham, where they then were, but at Derby. Their ride thither, which we give in the bridegroom's own words, is perhaps the most richly comic bit of literary history on record: "Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, Sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me: and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. did, I observed her to be in tears." This is surely the most remarkable Derby Race that ever fell to be chronicled in authentic story.

His marriage having been thus consummated, Johnson once more turned to teaching for a livelihood. In the Gentleman's Magazine for 1736 there is the following advertisement:—

[&]quot;At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by Samuel Johnson."

But only three pupils were forthcoming: David Garrick and his brother George, and another whom we need not name. The duties of his new position did not prove more agreeable than his former labours at Market-Bosworth; the establishment was therefore broken up in about eighteen months. The young rogues, his pupils, were vastly more struck by their teacher's peculiarities of manner than awed by his superior learning or won by his genuine worth. They used to listen at the door of his room, and peep through the keyhole, that they might enjoy the sight of his uncouth displays of fondness for his newly-acquired bride. The furtive observation of these "touslings" (to use a capital Scotch word which has no good English equivalent) of their master's beloved "Tetty," gave the rascals huge delight, and remained vividly in their memories long after every trace of the Latin and Greek they learned at Edial had faded out of their minds.

In the midst of all these unsuccessful attempts to gain a satisfactory livelihood, Johnson's thoughts had been constantly gravitating towards London, as the only place in Great Britain in which he was likely to find sufficient elbow-room. These thoughts at last took definite shape in a resolution to set out for the capital without delay, and tempt the mighty ocean in company with the many other literary adventurers there. Accordingly, on the 2nd of March, 1737, he and one of his late pupils—David Garrick, afterwards so famous as an actor and writer for the stage-put forth together, with a springtide of hope in their hearts, but rather low water in their pockets. Garrick used to say, speaking of this journey, "we rode and tied." And Johnson once remarked, when trying to fix the date of some event, "That was the year when I came to London with twopence-halfpenny in my pocket." Garrick, overhearing him, exclaimed, "Eh? what do you say? with twopence-halfpenny in your pocket?" Johnson: "Why, yes; when I came with twopence-halfpenny in my pocket, and thou, Davy, with three halfpence in thine." This must be held, however, as referring to their loose pocket-money; for although neither of them was by any means flush of cash, their pecuniary resources can hardly have been quite so narrow as the above anecdote might lead the reader to suppose. The only literary stock-in-trade with which Johnson was provided seems to have been his tragedy of "Irene," which he carried with him in an unfinished state. Mrs. Johnson he left behind at Lichfield.

The two friends had taken with them several letters of introduction to gentlemen of consequence in London; but it has not been clearly ascertained how Johnson employed himself for some time after his arrival there. He did not use to wear his heart upon his sleeve; there were some sorrows he never breathed into a human ear, and those attending his first appearance in the great Metropolis would seem to have been among the number. He learned now, more bitterly than ever before, what Shakespeare meant when he wrote of the "spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes." A bookseller, on being informed by him that he intended to live by literature, eyed his huge frame attentively and said, "You had better buy a porter's knot." This was only one rebuff, and from a man whom he afterwards reckoned among his best friends; but he doubtless met with many more which were less easily borne.

Now was the time for Johnson to test the soundness of his Birmingham friend's science of London economics; and he appears to have used to some purpose the information he had then received: "I dined," says he, "very well for eightpence, with very good company, at the Pine-Apple, in New-street, just by. Several of them had travelled. They expected to meet every day; but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing."

But there was at least one gentleman's table at which he was privileged to fare much better than at his own familiar and humble tavern. Mr. Henry Hervey, a branch of the noble family of that name, who had once been quartered at Lichfield as an officer in the army, and now had a house in London, received the poor scholar kindly and entertained him hospitably. How deeply Johnson was affected by this kindness, coming, as it did, just when he was otherwise quite joyless, our readers will gather from

what he used to say of his bounteous host: "If you call a dog. Hervey, I shall love him."

In the course of the summer of this year (1737) he returned to Lichfield, where, as we mentioned, he had left his wife when he himself set out for London. Here, during a residence of three months, he completed his tragedy, a little more than three acts of which had already been composed. He then returned to the capital, taking Mrs. Johnson with him, and made an unsuccessful attempt to get his play acted at Drury Lane. It was not put upon the boards until eleven years later.

Of all the patrons of learning in the great city the one towards whom Johnson had always cast most wistful eyes was Mr. Edward Cave, the original editor of the Gentleman's Magazine. he first came to town, and saw St. John's Gate, where that periodical was then printed, he "beheld it with reverence:" an instinct of mingled admiration and hope, which was not unfounded; for the Gentleman's Magazine was destined to be his chief source of livelihood for many years. His first contribution to it was a copy of Latin verses, addressed, in the complimentary style, to Cave himself: "Ad Urbanum." A year or two later he obtained regular and steady employment in connection with the Magazine, as reporter of the Parliamentary Debates, which were inserted under the heading, "The Senate of Lilliput," How much the speakers were indebted to their reporter for the fine things they were made to say and the style in which they said them, it is hardly necessary to state: the orations were probably quite as authentic as the speeches which Sallust and others are so fond of putting into the mouths of their ancient heroes. Johnson never attended either of the Houses of Parliament in person, and had to build only upon such hints as he received from those who did: often he got nothing more than the names of the speakers and the side they had taken in debate. Upon such slender foundations are some very big things reared. It is right, however, to add. that whenever Johnson was given to understand that these speeches were regarded by the public as genuine, that moment he gave up writing them; "for," said he, "I will not be accessary to the propagation of falsehood." Once get at this man's conscience and you

have got at the very man; let Johnson once come to see that a thing is wrong, and he and it never shake hands again in this world.

During the intervals when he was not engaged in such literary hack-work, Johnson must have found some relief in the composition of "London," a poem in imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal, which was published in May, 1738. Although greatly inferior to his other and later Satire, which will be noticed in due time, "London" is nevertheless understood to be one of the bestexisting imitations of any classic author. The poet Gray, a competent judge, has pronounced the verdict that it "has all the ease and all the spirit of an original." Poetry, however, as such, formed so small a portion of the history of Johnson's mind and heart, that to us in these days the interest and significance of this whole work turn upon one or two lines in which the Man himself seems to come to the surface: the Man, with all his clear integrity of soul, his rugged independence of spirit, his strong consciousness of deserving a better place in the world than had then been apportioned him, and his stern determination, at the same time, to repress all unmanly cries of distress. Here are a few of those lines, which, whatever may be their value as poetry, are infinitely suggestive as little delicate disclosures of the author's inner life:

- "The cheated nation's happy fav'rites see;
 Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me."
- "Has heaven reserv'd, in pity to the poor, No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore? No secret island in the boundless main? No peaceful desert yet unclaimed by Spain? Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore, And bear Oppression's insolence no more."
- "How, when competitors like these contend, Can surly Virtue hope to find a friend?"
- "This mournful truth is every where confess'd,
 SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D!"

True genius is not, indeed, self-conscious, as some understand the word, and moral worth is perhaps even less so; yet it ever holds good that,

"Though in whispers speaking, the full heart Will find a vent."

And may it not be obtuseness of vision on our part that prevents us from seeing how much real feeling has often gone to the composition of one of those poor rhymed couplets which it is now the fashion to despise? It is in the light of a belief like this that we recognize "London" as marking an era in its author's life. The thoughts with which his soul was big, and the feelings with which his heart was charged, found relief in song—a song which, if not marching to the grand music that now fires us, was yet, what poetry ever is, the finest utterance of the singer's highest self.

The Satire was a great success; and, in the first burst of novelty and surprise, a sort of awed whisper went round the literary circle: "here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope." Pope himself was so much pleased with the work as to make strict inquiry about the author of it—a complimentary curiosity which Johnson always remembered with honest pride. The poem reached a second edition in the course of a week. It was published by Robert Dodsley, who ultimately bought the copyright for tenguineas. "I might," says Johnson, "perhaps have accepted of less; but that Paul Whitehead had a little before got ten guineas for a poem; and I would not take less than Paul Whitehead." This rather makes us stare in these days, knowing, as we do, that hundreds of pounds are now given for poems which, in their way, create only the same sort of sensation as that produced by "London" in 1738.

But if the praise bestowed upon the work was unlimited, not so was the supply of money it brought. Man cannot live by praise alone; and if "London" made some of the great court the author, the great required to be courted by the author in their turn. To this Johnson's stern pride could not submit; so, sick of the sort of drudgery in which he had been hitherto chiefly employed, and despairing of the production of many more such works as his last, he began to let his thoughts wander once again to teaching, as a kind of forlorn hope. He was offered the mastership of the school of Appleby, in Leicestershire, provided he could obtain the degree of Master of Arts. He wrote to Dr. Adams, to ascertain if that could be given by the University of Oxford, as a kind of exceptional favour. It was decided, however, that it was too great a

favour to expect to receive from that University. Pope therefore recommended Johnson to Lord Gower, who immediately wrote to a friend of Dean Swift's, in the hope that through the Dean's influence the degree might be obtained from the University of Dublin. The letter is worth quoting:—

" Trentham, August 1, 1739.

"SIR,

"Mr. Samuel Johnson (author of 'London, a Satire,' and some other poetical pieces) is a native of this country, and much respected by some worthy gentlemen in his neighbourhood, who are trustees of a charity-school now vacant; the certain salary is sixty pounds a year, of which they are desirous to make him master; but, unfortunately, he is not capable of receiving their bounty, which 'would make him happy for life,' by not being 'a Master of Arts;' which, by the statutes of this school, the master of it must be.

"Now these gentlemen do me the honour to think that I have interest enough in you, to prevail upon you to write to Dean Swift, to persuade the University of Dublin to send a diploma to me, constituting this poor man Master of Arts in their University. They highly extol the man's learning and probity; and will not be persuaded, that the University will make any difficulty of conferring such a favour upon a stranger, if he is recommended by the Dean. They say, he is not afraid of the strictest examination, though he is of so long a journey; and will venture it, if the Dean thinks it necessary; choosing rather to die upon the road, 'than be starved to death in translating for booksellers;' which has been his only subsistence for some time past.

"I fear there is more difficulty in this affair, than those good-natured gentlemen apprehend; especially as their election cannot be delayed longer than the 11th of next month. If you see this matter in the same light that it appears to me, I hope you will burn this, and pardon me for giving you so much trouble about an impracticable thing; but, if you think there is a probability of obtaining the favour asked, I am sure your humanity, and propensity to relieve merit in distress, will incline you to serve the poor man, without my adding any more to the trouble I have

already given you, than assuring you that I am, with great truth, Sir, "Your faithful servant,

"GOWER."

The favour not being granted, Johnson thought of trying Civil Law; but the want of a degree stood effectually in his way here also. He had no help for it, then, but to return to the dreary, ill-paid, grinding toil of working for the booksellers. One of his letters to Cave, written about this period, ends thus:

"I am, Sir, yours impransus,

"Sam. Johnson."

Think of that! "Yours, without a dinner,

"Sam. Johnson."

There is no peculiar merit, indeed, in being "without a dinner;" but to be dinnerless and say nothing about it, or only to refer to the fact thus delicately at the end of a letter, couching the mention of it in Latin, too: that is well worth noting. Yet, though struggling in this way to keep the wolf from his own door, and barely succeeding, he was at the very same time busily interesting himself in the welfare of a young Scotchman, whose fortunes he was labouring to advance. This is shown by his next letter to Cave, which we give, not on its own account, but because of the testimony it bears to the fact that the pressure of Johnson's own sorrows did not render him callous to the sufferings of others:—

"TO MR. CAVE.

"DEAR SIR,

[No date.]

"You may remember I have formerly talked with you about a Military Dictionary. The eldest Mr. Macbean, who was with Mr. Chambers, has very good materials for such a work, which I have seen, and will do it at a very low rate. I think the terms of war and navigation might be comprised, with good explanations, in one 8vo pica, which he is willing to do for twelve shillings a sheet, to be made up a guinea at the second impression. If you think on it I will wait on you with him.

"I am, Sir, your humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

Among Johnson's early associates at St. John's Gate was one Samuel Boyse; of some note by reason of his cleverness, but of still greater notoriety by reason of his imprudence. Boyse was a good customer to the pawnbroking establishments; and on one occasion Johnson collected a sum of money to redeem his friend's clothes, which in two days after were pawned again. "The sum," said Johnson, when telling the story, "was collected by sixpences, at a time when to me sixpence was a serious consideration." No need of a long history of poor Johnson's sufferings at this period to those who can read the full meaning of one or two facts like the above.

Nobody reads now—perhaps few will ever read again—"Irene," which its author called, and believed to be, "a Tragedy:" but the picture of this great and good man fighting so hard for his daily bread, and only snatching a mouthful now and then, and even that much with difficulty, is the real Tragedy, and will never cease to interest until sorrow shall have come to be known among men not as a sad fact, but merely as an ugly name. Thousands who can claim no kindred with Johnson's genius, and would shrink from comparison with his moral worth, may yet extend to him the right hand of fellowship on the ground of some common grief; for—

[&]quot; Trouble makes us kin,"

CHAPTER IV.

STILL STRUGGLING-LITERARY HACK-WORK-"LIFE OF SAVAGE."

(1740-1744.)

During the next few years Johnson's literary contributions, especially for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, were numerous; but they must have been miserably paid, if we may judge from the necessitous condition in which his letters to Cave and others prove him to have been throughout this whole period. In the year 1741, a strong effort was made to get "Irene" put upon the stage. Mr. Cave writes thus to Dr. Birch:—

" Sept. 9, 1741.

"I have put Mr. Johnson's play into Mr. Gray's hands, in order to sell it to him, if he is inclined to buy it: but I doubt whether he will or not. He would dispose of the copy, and whatever advantage may be made by acting it. Would your society, or any gentleman, or body of men that you know, take such a bargain? He and I are very unfit to deal with theatrical persons. Fleetwood was to have acted in it last season, but Johnson's diffidence or prevented it."

Nothing satisfactory came of these negotiations.

One little bit of work put into our Author's hands about this time by a bookseller named Osborne deserves mention, because of a delightful brush that took place one day between employer and employed. It was, "Proposals for Printing the Bibliotheca Harleiana; or a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford." The richest version of the encounter between the two is to the effect that Johnson knocked Osborne down in his own shop, with one of his own folios, and then put his foot upon his neck. We like the story best in this form, but truth compels us to give Johnson's

own account: "Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop; it was in my own chamber."

The following extracts from a letter to Cave, written some time in 1742, will show the reader only too clearly to what straits poor Johnson was still reduced:—

"You told me on Saturday that I had received money on this work [a historical account of the British Parliament], and found set down 13l. 2s. 6d., reckoning the half-guinea of last Saturday. As you hinted to me that you had many calls for money, I would not press you too hard, and therefore shall desire only, as I send it in, two guineas for a sheet of copy; the rest you may pay me when it may be more convenient; and even by this sheet-payment I shall, for some time, be very expensive.

"The Life of Savage I am ready to go upon; and in great primer and pica notes, I reckon on sending in half a sheet a day; but the money for that shall likewise lie by in your hands till it is done. With the debates, shall not I have business enough? if I had but good pens."

Then in a P.S.:-

"I had no notion of having anything for the inscription. I hope you don't think I kept it to extort a price. I could think of nothing, till to-day. If you could spare me another guinea for the history, I should take it very kindly, to-night; but if you do not, I shall not think it an injury.

"I am almost well again."

The poor fellow has been ill, then; and, if Cave cannot send him a guinea "to-night," must go supperless to bed, it may be. He has been "without a dinner" before now, and he has not seen the end of his distresses even yet. The biographies of the great are not always cheerful reading: the noblest man Scotland ever produced is left to die like a dog, and Samuel Johnson, with the bravest heart and the manliest soul in the England of his time, is working hard, fighting hard, and has to beg a guinea, notwithstanding it all. This is the way, perhaps, to bring up hardy boys; but it is surely a sad thing to see their sufferings in the rearing.

As usual with Johnson, his own distress did not make him

forget the needs of others. We find him writing thus to Mr. Levett, of Lichfield, on behalf of his mother, and with a delicacy of feeling which is morally sublime:—

"TO MR. LEVETT; IN LICHFIELD.

"December 1, 1743.

"SIR,

"I am extremely sorry that we have encroached so much upon your forbearance with respect to the interest, which a great perplexity of affairs hindered me from thinking of with that attention that I ought, and which I am not immediately able to remit to you, but will pay it (I think twelve pounds) in two months. look upon this, and on the future interest of that mortgage, as my own debt; and beg that you will be pleased to give me directions how to pay it, and not mention it to my dear mother. If it be necessary to pay this in less time, I believe I can do it; but I take two months for certainty, and beg an answer whether you can allow me so much time. I think myself very much obliged to your forbearance, and shall esteem it a great happiness to be able to serve you. I have great opportunities of dispersing any thing that you may think it proper to make public. I will give a note for the money, payable at the time mentioned, to any one here that you shall appoint. "I am, Sir,

"Your most obedient and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"At Mr. Osborne's, bookseller, in Gray's Inn."

Next year he gave to the world one of the works by which, as an author at least, he will always be best known: "The Life of Richard Savage." Savage was a man of letters, of very fair natural abilities, and of profligate habits; but whose misfortunes and rough untrained virtues, as depicted by his biographer, have thrown both the others into the shade. His vices did not repel the stern moralist, while his talents won the literary censor's admiration, and his disastrous career went straight to the good man's heart. In a word, Johnson loved Savage; and in the strength of that love has composed one of the most interesting and edifying books in our language. It is written in Johnson's very best and

manliest English: his whole soul has gone into the work: and there breathes through every page of it that divine charity which hides the multitude of sins. The world may pronounce what verdict it chooses upon poor Savage's character and conduct; but the most carping critic must admit that Johnson's biography of his friend is one of the finest pieces of special pleading, whatever else, to be found in any language: and by those of us who think we can see deep into its inner spirit, it will ever be held as a kind of sacred work. It was a labour of pure love; is full of the richest moral reflections; and reads like a romance—for Savage's career was a romance in real life.

Johnson had been drawn towards this wild son of genius several years before; for, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1738, we find the following lines:—

"Ad RICARDUM SAVAGE.
"Humani studium generis cui pectore fervet
O colat humanum te foveatque genus."

Thee, in whose breast there burns a passion for the human race, O may the human race honour and cherish.

So it appears that the fine eye of Johnson—the eye of a pure heart—had discerned in this abandoned man some little germ of that "Enthusiasm of Humanity" which in our time is beginning to be called Divine; upon that he had thrown himself entirely; his faith in goodness had triumphed over all his friend's wild excesses; and he had believed in him to the last. "Those are no proper judges of Savage's conduct," his biographer writes at the close of his work, "who have slumbered away their time on the down of plenty; nor will any wise man presume to say, 'Had I been in Savage's condition, I should have lived or written better than Savage." "See how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief. Hark! in thine ear: Change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?"

"This relation," our Author continues, "will not be wholly without its use, if those who languish under any part of Savage's sufferings shall be enabled to fortify their patience by reflecting that they feel only those afflictions from which the abilities of

Savage did not exempt him; or those who, in confidence of superior capacities or attainments, disregarded the common maxims of life, shall be reminded that nothing will supply the want of prudence; and that negligence and irregularity long continued will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible." Could anything be fairer or kindlier than this? Altogether, this strange fellowship between two men so unlike each other is one of the most beautiful little pictures which it is given to the literary historian to draw, and awakens in the thoughtful reader's mind many reflections.

Strange times these two must often have spent together; frequently they were in such extremities of poverty that they could not pay for a bed, and had to wander whole nights in the streets. A Republic of Letters and its Head without a home! Nor can we console ourselves with the thought that these were the only two literary men who ever had to take to the London streets for the same sorrowful reasons. There were many others as destitute of money and shelter on those very same nights. "Sir," said Johnson once, "I honour Derrick for his presence of mind. One night, when Floyd, another poor author, was wandering about the streets in the night, he found Derrick fast asleep upon a bulk; upon being suddenly waked, Derrick started up, 'My dear Floyd, I am sorry to see you in this destitute state; will you come home with me to my lodgings?" His lodgings-poor fellow! To such miserable chances were authors exposed a hundred years ago.

Yet, in these aimless nocturnal rambles, the two friends with whom we are chiefly concerned at present were not always downcast; for, on one of the homeless nights in particular, we are told they traversed St. James's Square for several hours, cursing the prime minister, and resolving "they would stand by their country!" But there cannot have been much mirth in this wild excitement: and, although it is good to know that there were such episodes in Johnson's life, it is far from pleasant to meditate upon them.

Soon after Savage's Life was published, a gentleman who had recently dined with Cave and praised the book, was thus accosted

by his late host: "You made a man very happy t'other day."—
"How could that be?" said the gentleman; "nobody was there but ourselves." Cave answered, by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen, which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily that he did not choose to appear; but on hearing the conversation, he was highly delighted with the encomiums on his book.

The "Life of Savage" was composed at a heat; Johnson himself said, "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages at a sitting; but then I sat up all night." He writes quickly whose pen is guided by love. The work at once met with the success it deserved. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who did not then know Johnson, began to read it, standing with his arm against a mantelpiece; he was taken prisoner on the spot, and could not lay the book down until he had read to the end, when he found his arm quite benumbed.

It is curious that one should feel tempted to linger over a chapter like this, even more fondly than over the most flourishing pages in any history. It is perhaps the very saddest in the long career of a man who never lay very soft in this world of ours; yet that determined clinging to poor Savage, believing against all reason, and hoping against all expectation, is so beautiful in its pathos that, if one could have been permitted to re-cast Johnson's whole life-drama, it would have seemed a great mistake to strike out this tragic scene.

"There is some soul of goodness in things evil, Would men observingly distil it out."

CHAPTER V.

THE WORST OVER—DICTIONARY BEGUN—"IRENE" ON THE STAGE.

(1745—1749.)

IN 1745, Johnson published a pamphlet entitled, "Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with remarks on Sir Thomas Hanmer's Edition of Shakespeare." To this he affixed proposals for a new edition of the great dramatist. But the proposals were coldly received, Bishop Warburton being known to be engaged in a similar work. The pamphlet, however, was highly admired, and praised by Warburton himself. Johnson ever afterwards felt kindly towards the Bishop for this friendly notice: "he praised me at a time when praise was of value to me."

No further account of Johnson's literary doings during the years 1745 and 1746 has been left; but it is probable that he was drawing the plan of his Dictionary in this interval of silence. He is said also to have, at this time, contemplated a "Life of Alfred the Great," of which he talked with enthusiasm.

In 1747, his old friend, David Garrick, having obtained a share in the management of Drury Lane Theatre, Johnson honoured the opening night with a Prologue. The lines on Shakespeare are very much below the mark; but those on Ben Jonson and the wits of Charles's reign are admirable and well worth quoting:—

"Then Jonson came, instructed from the school,
To please in method, and invent by rule;
His studious patience and laborious art,
By regular approach essayed the heart;
Cold approbation gave the lingering bays,
For those who durst not censure, scarce could praise.

A mortal born, he met the general doom,
But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb.
The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,
Nor wished for Jonson's art, or Shakespeare's flame;
Themselves they studied, as they felt they writ,
Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.
Vice always found a sympathetic friend;
They pleased their age, and did not aim to mend.

Their cause was general, their supports were strong, Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long; Till shame regained the post that sense betrayed, And virtue called oblivion to her aid."

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There is a world of sound criticism, high morality, antithetic point, and strong sense in lines like these.

But the event of 1747, so far as Johnson is concerned, was the publication of his "Plan of the Dictionary of the English Language." He must have been brooding over this herculean work for many years; "it was not the effect of particular study," he said, "it had grown up in his mind insensibly." All great things are thus unnoticed in their beginnings; there is no noise made about the first sprouting of the corn; the mightiest ocean-storm receives its earliest impulse from a scarcely felt little breath of wind far out at sea. "Our consciousness rarely registers the beginning of a growth within us any more than without us; there have been many circulations of the sap before we detect the smallest sign of the bud." Several years before this time, when Johnson was one day sitting in Robert Dodsley's shop, the bookseller had suggested to him that a Dictionary of the English language might be expected to do well. Johnson had eagerly caught at the idea. but, pausing a little, had added, in his abrupt emphatic way, "I believe I shall not undertake it." The probability is, that Johnson nevertheless took the hint; and the two previous years of almost total silence may have been spent in elaborating the idea of the work and gathering in details.

Five firms of booksellers agreed to take the huge scheme in hand, and to give Johnson 1575% for his share of the work; but our Author was to pay the expense of preparing it for the press

and that would be a considerable item in a book of the kind. The Dictionary was considered a mighty undertaking for all concerned, in those days when publishing was in its youth, and bookbuyers were few. The "Plan" was dedicated to the Earl of Chesterfield, who had happened to see it before it was in print, the manuscript having got into his hands in a round-about way which it is unnecessary to detail. When it was observed to Johnson that this might prove an advantage to the work, his retort was: "No, Sir, it would have come out with more bloom if it had not been seen before by anybody."

It was a tremendous business for a single man to undertake; but it was Johnson's work by undoubted fore-ordination—massive, large, laborious, and only to be carried through by an iron will and an iron frame. Here is a dialogue which took place one day between him and Doctor Adams, who had come in upon him when busy at his Dictionary: -ADAMS: "This is a great work, How are you to get all the etymologies?"—JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, here is a shelf with Junius, and Skinner, and others; and there is a Welsh gentleman who has published a collection of Welsh proverbs, who will help me with the Welsh."—ADAMS: "But, Sir, how can you do this in three years?"—JOHNSON: "Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years."—ADAMS: "But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their Dictionary."—Johnson: "Sir, thus it is: this is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proporsixteen hundred. tion of an Englishman to a Frenchman."

Johnson engaged six men as amanuenses, five of whom were Scotchmen. We shall see that our Author always took a wicked but good-natured pleasure in girding at the "beggarly Scotch;" but, like many others who affect to despise the natives of North Britain, he knew their sterling worth, and, while he joked at their poverty and pride, gladly availed himself of their steady services. It is to his everlasting honour that he remembered each one of those poor servitors ever afterwards; and almost the whole of them required, and received, at one time or other, special marks of his benevolent care. They helped him through

with a great work, and his great heart was touched with a gratitude that never died. This man, you see, did not look upon those who served him as mere "hands," but preferred to think of them as "souls" rather. The two points of view are somewhat different.

With Johnson's recent struggles fresh in our memory, it is pleasant to be able to record a fine little excursion which he and his wife made in the summer of 1748 to Tunbridge Wells. He met there a number of the great men of his time: Cibber, Garrick, Richardson, Whiston, Onslow (the Speaker), Pitt, Lyttelton, and others. In a print representing some of the "remarkable characters" who were at Tunbridge Wells that season, Johnson is observed standing as the foremost figure—and a good right he had to stand first.

In January, 1749, was published "The Vanity of Human Wishes," an imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. It had been composed the previous year at Hampstead, and composed very rapidly. The poem only brought the author fifteen guineas. It is very much superior, as a work, to "London," but more didactic, more elaborate, more profound, more heavily loaded The lighter minds of the period did with moral reflections. not relish it quite so highly as they had relished the other. Garrick, for example, said, "When Johnson lived much with the Herveys, and saw a good deal of what was passing in life, he wrote his 'London,' which is lively and easy. When he became more retired, he gave us his 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' which is as hard as Greek. Had he gone on to imitate another satire, it would have been as hard as Hebrew." But the truth is, Johnson had been seeing rather too much of life when "London" was composed; and the retirement which had come at last was entirely healthful compared with the diseased excitement of that earlier time. Had Garrick been capable of seeing to the bottom of the "liveliness" and "ease" of the "London" period, he might have felt disposed to give these two charming qualities less pleasant names.

Thanks to the generous friendship of Garrick, "Irene," after lying neglected for more than eleven years, was at length got on



to the boards of Drury Lane. But not without considerable difficulty even now; for Garrick had decided that without several alterations the play was unfitted for representation. proved rebellious, and a violent quarrel ensued. "Sir," said he toa friendly mediator, "the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels." The enraged dramatist was at last prevailed upon to allow a few changes, that the tragedy might have at least a chance of success. Doctor Adams, who was present on the first night of its representation, gives the following description of the scene: "Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself in a manly strain, soothed the audience, and the play went off tolerably, till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bow-string round herneck. The audience cried out 'Murder! Murder!' She several times attempted to speak; but in vain. At last she was obliged: to go off the stage alive." This "damned" passage was afterwards deleted, and the lady, very properly declining to die somuch against the will of the audience, allowed herself to be quietly despatched behind the scenes. But all would not suffice. The very best actors did their very best work in its behalf; but, after dragging out a weary existence of nine days (nine days of wonder that the thing was living so long), it peacefully gave upthe ghost, and was seen no more. The author had his threenights' profits, however, and from Mr. Robert Dodsley he received' 100% as the price of the copy; so that, in a pecuniary respect, "Irene" was not such a failure after all.

When Johnson was asked how he brooked the ill-success of his tragedy, he replied, "like the Monument." He did not lash himself into fury because the public had declared him no dramatist; he had appealed to the public, and, as he himself said, "the public must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions." One little anecdote of his behaviour while his tragedy was being represented must not be omitted. He had decided that it was becoming in a great dramatist to dress differently and more

gorgeously while his work was before the world; he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side-boxes in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He observed to a friend that "when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes.' The sage moralist had not read "Sartor Resartus," but he had used his eyes too well not to see that clothes have a great deal to do with the making of a man.

There were two classes of people whom Johnson seems to have had almost a constitutional tendency to inveigh against: actors and Scotchmen. Johnson: "Players, Sir! I look on them as no better than creatures set upon tables and joint-stools to make faces and produce laughter, like dancing dogs."—"But, Sir, you will allow that some players are better than others?" Johnson: "Yes, Sir, as some dogs dance better than others." And of his attacks upon the Scotch there was no end.

But circumstances were gradually bringing about a modification in his harsh judgments of both these classes. His dictionary labours connected him almost hourly with honest and hard-working Scotchmen, and the performance and rehearsal of his play had now shown him many good qualities in the much-despised actors and actresses. From this time forward to his death he kept up acquaintance with some of these, and was always ready to do them a kindness. For a good while after the public appearance of "Irene" Johnson was a pretty frequent visitor to the Green Room; but his virtue by-and-by took alarm, and he fled from this novel temptation. "I'll come no more behind your scenes, David; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities."

As a poem "Irene" is not devoid of merit, but it is not, in any sense, a drama. There is no life in it, no action, no characterization. All the dramatis personæ are but the author himself under the filmsiest of veils; even Irene, the heroine, is only, in Garrick's words applied to a different case, "Johnson in petticoats." There is only one real person in the play, and that is the author. Every-

body is like everybody else, and everybody else is like Johnson. Goldsmith was right when he said that if Johnson had tried to compose fables, after the fashion of Æsop, he would have made "the little fishes talk like great whales." The fact is, there was no vestige of the dramatic faculty in his nature; and his failure on this occasion was so complete that he never attempted this sort of work again. One or two small pieces excepted, "Irene" was the last of Johnson's poetical efforts also. And we are not sorry that this element in his life and work is dropping out of our sight thus early; for, with all our willingness to do justice to the thing called poetry in that period of our literature, the influences of a poetical school so utterly different, and, as we think, so infinitely grander, have played upon us so long and to such fine issues, that we can hardly allow the sacred name of poetry to anything which does not breathe and burn-as the verse-compositions of that age scarcely ever do. As little episodes in the writer's own inner life Johnson's poems were all-important to him, and are still interesting to us; but as solid contributions to the poetical literature of our country they are almost valueless. Yet the attempt was good, and did him good; and if the result of his endeavour was only one other proof of the "vanity of human wishes," the desire expressed in it to rise into the clear heaven of song, and to make his great thoughts march grandly to their own music, is something that must enter into the very foreground of any true picture of JOHNSON THE MAN.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE RAMBLER"—JOHNSON'S STYLE—HIS WIFE'S DEATH.

(1750-1752.)

SINCE the death of Steele's "Guardian" in 1712, periodical writing in this country had been directed almost exclusively towards political subjects. But, in 1750, Johnson made an effort to bring it back to literature once more by the publication of the first number of "The Rambler," which appeared on Tuesday, the 20th of March, that year. In this publication he put forth his first decided claim to a distinct place among British Essayists. The title of the work scarcely suits its matter; for "The Rambler" is anything but rambling, either as regards the subjects chosen or the manner in which they are treated. Not crinolines, patches on ladies' faces, fans, and trifling little fashions are here discussed; but solemn figures, like Ambition, Revenge, Life, Death, move over its pages, and with a kind of gloomy grandeur in their air, which is the direct outcome of one portion, and that not the least imposing portion, of Johnson's noble nature. There are, indeed, lighter papers interspersed; but even these are, most of them, only stately moral essays trying to fancy themselves easy, genial reading. Notwithstanding the rollicking title of these papers, let not him that runs try to read them, and never let any one dream of opening a Rambler in a railway carriage. Johnson was conscious of this misnomer himself: he once said to Sir Joshua Reynolds, "What must be done, Sir, will be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper, I was at a loss how to name it. sat down at night upon my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. The 'Rambler' seemed the best that occurred, and I took it." The Italians have unconously put the absurdity of the name in its strongest light by

their translation of it into their own language in the form of "II Vagabondo."

But all this seems mere trifling and wretched quibbling in the face of a grand fact like the following: "Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly: grant, I beseech Thee, that in this undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation of myself and others: grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen." Here is a man who dare not write an essay even, except in the name of the Lord! It is a most beautiful and refreshing fact. For this is a strong man, and no sentimentalist; a broad man, and no bigot; a religious man, and no fanatic: and this prayer of his is well worth recording.

"The Rambler" was published twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and went on without interruption till the 14th of March, 1752—when it breathed its last. Before he undertook the work at all the author had no doubt collected materials for many of the future papers, arranging them in the form of notes. The following specimen of these *Notanda* may interest the reader: it is a rough draft of the 196th number of "The Rambler":—

Youth's Entry, &c.

"Baxter's account of things in which he had changed his mind as he grew up. Voluminous.—No wonder.—If every man was to tell, or mark, on how many subjects he has changed, it would make vols. but the changes not always observed by man's self.— From pleasure to bus. [business] to quiet; from thoughtfulness to reflect. to piety; from dissipation to domestic. by impercept. gradat but the change is certain. Dial non progredi progress. esse conspicimus. Look back, consider what was thought at some dist. period.

"Hope predom. in youth. Mind not willingly indulges unpleasingthoughts. The world lies enamelled before him, as a distantprospect sun-gilt;—the qualities only found by coming to it. Love is to be all joy—children excellent—Fame to be constant caresses of the great—applauses of the learned—smiles of Beauty.

- "Fear of disgrace—Bashfulness—Finds things of less importance.

 Miscarriages forgot like excellencies;—if remembered, of no import. Danger of sinking into negligence of reputation;—lest the fear of disgrace destroy activity.
- "Confidence in himself. Long tract of life before him.—No thought of sickness.—Embarrassment of affairs.—Distraction of family. Public calamities.—No sense of the prevalence of bad habits. Negligent of time—ready to undertake—careless to pursue—all changed by time.
- "Confident of others—unsuspecting as unexperienced—imagining himself secure against neglect, never imagines they will venture to treat him ill. Ready to trust; expecting to be trusted. Convinced by time of the selfishness, the meanness, the cowardice, the treachery of men.
 - "Youth ambitious, as thinking honours easy to be had.
- "Different kinds of praise pursued at different periods. Of the gay in youth. dang. hurt, &c., despised.
- "Of the fancy in manhood. Ambit.—stocks—bargains.—Of the wise and sober in old age—seriousness—formality—maxims, but general—only of the rich, otherwise age is happy—but at last everything referred to riches—no having fame, honour, influence, without subjection to caprice.
 - " Horace.
- "Hard it would be if men entered life with the same views with which they leave it, or left as they enter it.—No hope—no undertaking—no regard to benevolence—no fear of disgrace, &c.
- "Youth to be taught the piety of age—age to retain the honour of youth."

The sale of "The Rambler" was slow at first, and its circulation limited; but it was highly valued by a select few from the beginning, and ultimately spread very widely. Mrs. Johnson, whose verdict went for much with her devoted husband, said to him, after she had read a few numbers, "I thought very well of you before: but I did not imagine you could have written anything equal to this." An edition of the essays was published almost simultaneously at Edinburgh, under the superintendence of

Mr. James Elphinstone—a circumstance for which Johnson felt very grateful, and by which he was not a little flattered.

Of the matter of these essays we have incidentally spoken already, and there is perhaps little diversity of opinion as to its sterling worth. Objections to the "Rambler," and, indeed, to Johnson's prose-works generally, we have observed to turn chiefly upon the alleged defects of his style. It is not his matter, but his manner, which is declared to be at fault. Nothing was more common in his own time, or is more common now, than for people to talk scornfully of "insufferable Johnsonese," "Johnsonian periods," "swelling sentences," and so forth. We are not careful to defend our Author's style against such charges: some one has said that the character which needs defending is hardly worth defence, and the same may be said of much else, style included. Johnson's style, at its best estate, is big, like the heart of the man; strong, like his understanding; robust, like his bodily frame; massive and full, like his whole nature. It carries well the sound good sense, the manly morality, the copious information, the firm thought, with which it is generally charged. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that many of the subjects on which he wrote were given to him by others, or forced upon him by the necessities of authorship: it thus happens that the matter is often unworthy of the dress he made it wear. But when he was allowed freely to choose his own subjects and to take his own time, both matter and style were alike admirable. And we may be pardoned for hinting that objections to the Johnsonian style come with a very bad grace from persons who have never, all their life long, been guilty of a single Johnsonian thought. As to those who remain aloof from Johnson's works because they cannot get over his style, we can only say it is a pity—for them chiefly. Johnson was himself quite aware that he often wrote, and occasionally talked, "too big" for the occasion. "Sir," said he once to Boswell, "if Robertson's style be faulty, he owes it to me; that is, having too many words, and those too big ones." But he was not always quite so ready to admit this defect, and would sometimes defend himself with characteristic shrewdness. Sir Joshua Reynolds once remarked to him that he had been talking above the

capacity of his hearers on one occasion. "No matter, Sir." said Johnson, "they consider it as a compliment to be talked to as if they were wiser than they are. So true is this, Sir, that Baxter made it a rule in every sermon that he preached to say something that was above the capacity of his audience." Almost always, however, his conversational style was perfect: straightforward and direct—for no time was to be lost; clear and decided—for there was to be no mistake about his meaning; downright and forcible. for he must remain champion of the field. It is but right to add that the objections to our Author's style, such as they are, apply with more force to "The Rambler" than to any of his subsequent works, which were all easier and less weighty in their carriage. On the whole, however, it is absurd to take exception to Johnson's style (as is often done) because it is not that of Swift or Addison. His way of thinking was not theirs; his subjects were not theirs; above all, he himself was not they.

On the 5th of April, 1750, Milton's "Comus" was to be acted at Drury Lane, for the benefit of the poet's grand-daughter. Johnson wrote a Prologue for the entertainment; and, on the day previous to the performance, published the following letter on the subject in the "General Advertiser." The letter is characteristic and very creditable to the writer's heart:—

"SIR.

"That a certain degree of reputation is acquired merely by approving the works of genius, and testifying a regard for the memory of authors, is a truth too evident to be denied; and therefore to ensure a participation of fame with a celebrated poet, many, who would, perhaps, have contributed to starve him when alive, have heaped expensive pageants upon his grave.

"It must, indeed, be confessed, that this method of becoming known to posterity with honour, is peculiar to the great, or at least to the wealthy; but an opportunity now offers for almost every individual to secure the praise of paying a just regard to the illustrious dead, united with the pleasure of doing good to the living. To assist industrious indigence, struggling with distress and debilitated by age, is a display of virtue, and an acquisition of happiness and honour.

"Whoever, then, would be thought capable of pleasure in reading the works of our incomparable Milton, and not so destitute of gratitude as to refuse to lay out a trifle in rational and elegant entertainment, for the benefit of his living remains, for the exercise of their own virtue, the increase of their reputation, and the pleasing consciousness of doing good, should appear at Drury Lane Theatre to-morrow, April 5, when 'Comus' will be performed for the benefit of Mrs. Elizabeth Foster, grand-daughter to the author, and the only surviving branch of his family.

"N.B.—There will be a new prologue on the occasion, written by the author of 'Irene,' and spoken by Mr. Garrick; and, by particular desire, there will be added to the masque a dramatic satire, called 'Lethe,' in which Mr. Garrick will perform."

During the rest of this year, the whole of 1751, and the opening months of 1752, we are to suppose our Author busily engaged with his Dictionary and "The Rambler." His work was now much more to his mind than formerly, though his circumstances were still, it appears, far from easy. But we hear of no such disastrous distresses as those we have had to record in earlier chapters; the worst is over, although the best may not be remarkably good.

On the 14th of March, 1752, the last number of "The Rambler" was given to the world. It must have been written under the gathering cloud of a great domestic affliction; for, three days later, his beloved wife passed away. She died in the night. The Rev. Dr. Taylor, who had been immediately sent for by the bereaved husband, arrived early in the morning, and found Johnson in tears and greatly agitated. Shortly after he entered, Johnson asked him to engage in prayer. They both prayed—each in turn; and this exercise of devotion somewhat soothed the sorrowing man.

Next day he wrote to the Doctor as follows:-

"TO THE REVEREND DR. TAYLOR."

" March 18, 1752.

"DEAR SIR,

"Let me have your company and instruction. Do not live away from me. My distress is great.

"Pray desire Mrs. Taylor to inform me what mourning I should buy for my mother and Miss Porter, and bring a note in writing with you.

"Remember me in your prayers, for vain is the help of man.
"I am, dear Sir, &c.,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Let us mark the grief of this great strong man: but let us say nothing about it—silence is best.

He buried the remains of his wife in Bromley Church, Kent, and himself composed a funeral sermon for her, which was never preached, and need not be given here. Sitting in the awful gloom of the Shadow of Death, one child of genius writes a sermon, another a poem, and a third writes not at all; but, whether speech, or song, or silence, all are eloquent of thoughts which lie "far hidden from the reach of words," and feelings too fine to be expressed even by tears. Thirty years after the sad event, Johnson had the following epitaph inscribed on his wife's tombstone:—

"Hic conduntur reliquiæ
ELIZABETHÆ,
Antiquâ Jarvisiorum gente,
Peatlingæ, apud Leicestrienses, ortæ;
Formosæ, cultæ, ingeniosæ, piæ;
Uxoris, primis nuptiis, HENRICI PORTER,
Secundis, SAMUELIS JOHNSON:
Qui multum amatam, diuque defletam
Hoc lapide contexit.
Obiit Londini, Mense Mart.
A.D. MDCCLII."

[Translation.]

Here lie the remains Of ELIZABETH,

Sprung from the ancient family of the Jarvises of Peatling, near Leicester;

Fair, cultured, gifted, dutiful;

Wife, by her first marriage, of HENRY PORTER,
By her second, of SAMUEL JOHNSON:
Who covered with this stone
Her whom he loved much, and wept for long.
She died in London, in the month of March,
A.D. MDCCLII.

No wretched piece of swelling bombast this, but a simple and touching tribute to the memory of the woman he had loved, and married, and companied with for sixteen years.

That Johnson loved his wife devotedly has never once been doubted; that his wife did not return the affection in quite the same degree may easily be believed; but that "she indulged herself in country air and nice living, at an unsuitable expense, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London," we have on the authority of only one lady—and ladies have not hitherto been found the fairest judges of their own sex. In any case, it is clear that he was only the more if she was so much the less; but he never complained himself, and it is unnecessary to defend where no charge has been made. Her wedding-ring was kept by him till his own death—a sanctified treasure, in a little round wooden box, in the inside of which he had pasted a slip of paper with these words written on it:—

" Eheu! Eliz. Johnson, Nupta Jul. 9° 1736, Mortua, eheu! Mart. 17° 1752."

How Johnson felt, and what he thought, during the immediate pressure of this the heaviest trial of a heavily tried life, may be gathered from a beautiful and noble letter of sympathy to Mr. James Elphinstone, written eighteen months before, on a like mournful occasion, but which finds its fitting place here:—

"TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTONE.

"September 25, 1750.

"DEAR SIR,

"You have, as I find by every kind of evidence, lost an excellent mother; and I hope you will not think me incapable of partaking of your grief. I have a mother, now eighty-two years of

age, whom, therefore, I must soon lose, unless it please God that she should rather mourn for me. I read the letters in which you relate your mother's death to Mrs. Strahan, and think I do myself honour, when I tell you that I read them with tears; but tears are neither to you nor to me of any further use, when once the tribute of nature has been paid. The business of life summons us away from useless grief, and calls us to the exercise of those virtues of which we are lamenting our deprivation. The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another, is to guard, and excite, and elevate, his virtues. This your mother will still perform, if you diligently preserve the memory of her life, and of her death: a life, so far as I can learn, useful, wise, and innocent; and a death, resigned, peaceful and holy. I cannot forbear to mention, that neither reason nor revelation denies you to hope that you may increase her happiness by obeying her precepts; and that she may, in her present state, look with pleasure upon every act of virtue to which her instructions or example have contributed. Whether this be more than a pleasing dream, or a just opinion of separate spirits, is, indeed, of no great importance to us, when we consider ourselves as acting under the eye of God: yet, surely, there is something pleasing in the belief that our separation from those whom we love is merely corporeal; and it may be a great incitement to virtuous friendship, if it can be made probable, that that union that has received the divine approbation shall continue to eternity.

"There is one expedient by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of soothing recollection, when time shall remove her yet farther from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration. To this, however painful for the present, I cannot but advise you, as to a source of comfort and satisfaction in the time to come; for all comfort and all satisfaction is sincerely wished you by, dear Sir,

"Your most obliged, most obedient,

"And most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

So closely did the thought of his departed wife cling to Johnson's memory all the rest of his days on earth, that it may be doubted if she was not mightier, as an influence, after her death than she had ever been when alive.

"The idea of her life 'did' sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination;
And every lovely organ of her life
'Did' come apparel'd in more precious habit,
More moving-delicate, and full of life,
Into the eye and prospect of his soul,
Than when she liv'd indeed."

Before closing this chapter, let us look for a moment into some of the deep places of that great heart; and let us try to look reverently—for this is no common case, and no common man.

" April 26th, 1752, being after
" 12 at Night of the 25th.

"O Lord! Governor of heaven and earth, in whose hands are embodied and departed spirits, if thou hast ordained the souls of the dead to minister to the living, and appointed my departed wife to have care of me, grant that I may enjoy the good effects of her attention and ministration, whether exercised by appearance, impulses, dreams, or in any other manner agreeable to thy government. Forgive my presumption, enlighten my ignorance, and however meaner agents are employed, grant me the blessed influences of thy Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

"March 28, 1753. I kept this day as the anniversary of my Tetty's death, with prayers and tears in the morning. In the evening I prayed for her conditionally, if it were lawful."

Again and again we have heard all this called superstition, and then seen it on the instant put contemptuously aside. Really it is amusing—or amazing, one hardly knows which—to watch the coolness with which some people ticket a deep feeling with an ill-sounding name, and then fancy they have done with it for ever. Is this clever settlement of difficult questions owing to superior

insight, one wonders, or only to supreme impertinence? Call the widowed man's prayer for his dead wife love, and not superstition, and then it will seem beautiful in our eyes. Beautiful, and not wholly unintelligible; for, "Love does not aim simply at the conscious good of the beloved object: it is not satisfied without perfect loyalty of heart; it aims at its own completeness."

"April 23, 1753. I know not whether I do not too much indulge the vain longings of affection; but I hope they intenerate my heart, and that when I die like my Tetty, this affection will be acknowledged in a happy interview, and that in the meantime I am incited by it to piety. I will, however, not deviate too much from common and received methods of devotion."

And then all his own little occasional faults of temper would come back upon the tender-hearted, large-souled man, as grievous offences hardly to be forgiven: but he never blamed the dead. Here is an extract from one of his prayers uttered about a year after his wife's decease:—

"O Lord, who givest the grace of repentance, and hearest the prayers of the penitent, grant that by true contrition I may obtain forgiveness of all the sins committed, and of all duties neglected, in my union with the wife whom thou hast taken from me; for the neglect of joint devotion, patient exhortation, and mild instruction."

Johnson's faults, so far at least as they affected his wife, never lay about the roots of his character: that is abundantly evident.

"And, O Lord, so far as it may be lawful in me, I commend to thy fatherly goodness the soul of my departed wife; beseeching thee to grant her whatever is best in her present state, and finally to receive her to eternal happiness."

" Can we believe that the dear dead are gone?"

CHAPTER VII.

JOHNSON'S HOUSEHOLD-HIS FRIENDS-VISIT TO OXFORD.

(1752-1754.)

Shortly before this sad event, Mrs. Williams, daughter of a Welsh physician, and a woman of some parts, had come to London in hopes of being cured of a cataract in both her eyes. She afterwards became totally blind. While Mrs. Johnson lived, this lady had been received as a constant visitor of the family; and now, after his wife's death, Johnson gave her an apartment in the house, which she occupied till 1758, when Johnson removed to Gray's Inn, and she again went into lodgings. At a still subsequent period she once more became an inmate with our Author in Johnson's Court, remaining with him from that time forward to her death.

Another humble friend, Mr. Robert Levett, an obscure physician practising among the poorer classes, was favoured in the same remarkable way; had an apartment in Johnson's house, and waited upon him every morning through the whole course of his breakfast, which was both late and long-continued. Johnson had such an inordinately high opinion of his poor friend's abilities that he had been heard to say, he should not be satisfied though attended by the whole College of Physicians, if Mr. Levett were not among them. What a strange family group! Rough, impetuous, making no fuss about his good deeds, and looking for no very high returns, this man gathers the poor and the needy and the otherwise forsaken round his board: drawn to them, as they were to him, by the attractive power of a kind heart. When Mr. Levett was mentioned on one occasion, and some surprise expressed at Johnson's fondness for him, Goldsmith remarked, "He is poor and

honest, and that is recommendation enough to Johnson"—a beautiful tribute to the worth of a fine soul.

But our Author had by this time many outside friends of another sort, and the circle was constantly widening. One of the most distinguished of these was the famous Sir Joshua Reynolds, the account of whose first meeting with Johnson is very interesting. When residing in Castle Street, Cavendish Square, our Author used frequently to visit two ladies who lived opposite to him, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. Reynolds was also in the habit of visiting them: and there, on one occasion, the two men met. In the course of conversation the ladies happened to express their regret for the death of a friend to whom they had owed great obligations; Reynolds observed, "You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from a burden of gratitude." The ladies, of course, gave utterance to a little feminine disgust at this harsh statement, which struck them as very selfish; but Johnson at once undertook Sir Joshua's defence, taken captive, on the instant, by this proof of mind on the part of the speaker. That happy deliverance was the commencement of a long and strong friendship between the two visitors, which began in real earnest that very evening-Johnson having gone home with Reynolds to sup with him. As soon as a man proved that there was something in him -that he could think for himself-Johnson struck hands with him instantly, recognising, as by a kind of intellectual free-masonry, a true brother.

Reynolds used to tell a capital and thoroughly characteristic anecdote of his new friend shortly after the above meeting. One evening, when again visiting at the Cotterells', the Duchess of Argyle and another lady of high rank came in. This gorgeous arrival would seem to have somewhat dazzled the eyes of their entertainers; for Johnson fancied himself and his friend thrown quite into the shade in the presence of these two great lights. But he took his revenge, and a very novel one too. The ladies' pride was to blame, and their pride should be brought low. Johnson resolved to disgrace them in the eyes of the grandees by making it be supposed that he and his friend were low people, who should not, of course, have been on visiting terms at such a house. He

therefore shouted aloud to Reynolds, "How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were to work as hard as we could?" Who but Johnson could ever have dreamt of such a masterly revenge?

Soon after the decease of "The Rambler" our Author's acquaintance with Mr. Bennet Langton, of Langton, in Lincolnshire, began: an acquaintance which speedily ripened into a valuable friendship. His introduction to the sage is as rich in its way as that of Sir Joshua Reynolds. It was at Johnson's own house, and in the morning, or rather at noon-for our friend seldom issued from his bed-chamber before mid-day. Mr. Langton had known the great man hitherto only by his writings; and the notions he had formed of the personal appearance of the author of "The Rambler" were more accordant with the ideal fitness of things than with stern matter of fact. Down from his bedroom, and almost straight out of bed, came a huge uncouth figure, with a little dark wig set upon his head rather than covering it, and his clothes hanging all loose about him. But, as usual, when the stranger had recovered from his surprise, and had got his first look through the clothes and all the oddities into the real man, he was charmed to the spot; and one of the tenderest friendships of Johnson's life was consummated that day. This connection was none the less pleasing to one of the parties because the other happened to have "good blood" in his veins: Johnson was afterwards heard to say, "Langton, Sir, has a grant of free warren from Henry the Second, and Cardinal Stephen Langton, in King John's reign, was of his family."

The commencement of another friendship is interesting and curious, and, although it took place about two years later, had better be given here. Mr. Murphy, conductor of a periodical called "The Gray's Inn Journal," when in the country, on one occasion, with Foote the actor, happened to remark that he must be off to London in order to get ready for the press one of the numbers of his paper. "You need not go on that account," said Foote; "here is a French magazine, in which you will find a very pretty oriental tale: translate that, and send it to your printer." Murphy agreed, but, on his return to town, he learned

that the tale was itself a translation from one of Johnson's Ramblers. Mr. Murphy, some time after, waited upon Johnson to explain the curious incident; and a friendship, never broken, was there and then formed.

Through Bennet Langton our Author was afterwards introduced to a fellow-student and boon companion of his, named Topham Beauclerk—a gay and clever but rather "fast" young man of the period. Partly by sheer force of moral contrast, partly by reason of Beauclerk's "good blood" (he being of the St. Alban's family, and descent never seeming contemptible in Johnson's eyes), partly through a fancied resemblance, on the young fellow's side, to Charles the Second, and partly by subtle influences less easily defined, Beauclerk fairly got round the good man's heart, and could by-and-by use more liberties with him than any other of his acquaintance. "What a coalition!" said Garrick, when informed of this new alliance; "I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Round House." But the queer-looking union never quite led to that, although it did give rise to some strange escapades on the grave moralist's part, to which, in after life, he must often have looked back with some wonder, though, we trust, with a conscience not ill at ease.

As in the case of Savage, so here; the young man's gaiety, good-humour, wit, and passionate fulness of life, were a fine set-off against Johnson's constitutional gravity and sober-mindedness; while his friend's shortcomings were either sharply rebuked, or laughingly reproved, or tenderly overlooked—according to their kind and degree. Here is one of the sharp rebukes:—Beauclerk indulged freely in satire, and was thus reproved: "You never open your mouth but with intention to give pain; and you have often given me pain, not from the power of what you have said, but from seeing your intention." Here are two of the laughing reprovals:—Johnson once said to him, slightly altering a line of Pope's,

"Thy love of folly, and thy scorn of fools!

Everything thou dost shows the one, and everything thou say'st, the other." And again, on another occasion: "Thy body is all vice, and thy mind all virtue." Beauclerk not seeming to take this

in an altogether complimentary sense, Johnson added: "Nay, Sir, Alexander the Great, marching in triumph into Babylon, could not have desired to have had more said to him."

One wild night which these three jolly good fellows spent together must be described with all particularity; we give it therefore in Boswell's own words:—

"One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good-humour agreed to their proposal: 'What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you.' He was soon dressed, and they sallied forth together into Covent-garden, where the greengrocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called bishop, which Johnson had always liked; while, in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines.

> 'Short, O short, then be thy reign, And give us to the world again!'

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day: but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for 'leaving his social friends, to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls.' Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, 'I heard of your frolic t'other night. You'll be

in the "Chronicle." Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, "He durst not do such a thing. His wife would not let him!"

On awaking next day at noon after such a Falstaffian night as the above, we can fancy Johnson repeating his predecessor's words, and saying: "If the young rascal have not given me medicines to make me love him, I'll be hanged; it could not be else; I have drunk medicines."

Somehow, we are constrained to like our hero all the better for these strange-seeming youthful frolics. That nature is surely not the highest which is developed all on one side; the artist who makes himself famous by playing wonderful fantasias on a single string is only a kind of musical monster at the best. The title Johnson had given his essays we have pronounced to be a misnomer; but the author himself could, on occasions, prove a decided rambler. There must have been that in Samuel Johnson which needed to come out in some such way, else it would not have come; and, in any case, it is always wiser to take a great man exactly as we find him, than to waste time in scheming how he might have been made differently.

In spite of its apparently violent contrast with the wild carousal just described, we have no hesitation in giving, in immediate sequence to it, the following Prayer, with which Johnson entered upon the year 1753:—

"Jan. 1, 1753, N.S., which I shall use for the future.

"Almighty God, who hast continued my life to this day, grant that, by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I may improve the time which thou shalt grant me, to my eternal salvation. Make me to remember, to thy glory, thy judgments and thy mercies. Make me to consider the loss of my wife, whom thou hast taken from me, that it may dispose me, by thy grace, to lead the residue of my life in thy fear. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

This was as much an outcome of the real man as the other; and we must look at Johnson in both lights if we would rightly understand his life.

Though still busy upon the Dictionary our Author found time

to take a very lively interest in a periodical called "The Adventurer," in which he began to write on the 10th of April, 1753 -marking his essays with the signature T. The most interesting circumstance in connection with these papers is, not their literary worth-which is much-but the fact of Johnson's having never acknowledged them, and his reason for this. Mrs. Williams once disclosed the reason in these words: "As he had given those essays to Dr. Bathurst, who sold them at two guineas each, he never would own them: nay, he used to say he did not write them, but the fact was, that he dictated them, while Bathurst wrote." When Johnson heard Mrs. Williams's account of the matter, he smiled and said nothing. There is casuistry at work here, but it is of such an amiable kind that one hardly feels disposed to call it by its right name. Bathurst was a special favourite of Johnson's: "Dear Bathurst," he used to say, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "was a man to my heart's content: he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig: he was a very good hater." And for this power of hating our Author loved him: "Love hard by Hate!" Poor Bathurst died abroad, in the expedition against the Havannah. When the sad news reached Johnson, he said, in simple and affecting language: "The Havannah is taken; -- a conquest too dearly obtained; for Bathurst died before it." There can have been no merry twinkle in his eye when he spoke that epitaph.

Here is an interesting memorandum from our Author's Diary of these months:—

"April 3, 1753. I began the second vol. of my Dictionary, room being left in the first for Preface, Grammar, and History, none of them yet begun.

"O God, who hast hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labour, and in the whole task of my present state; that when I shall render up at the last day an account of the talent committed to me, I may receive pardon for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen."

These little jottings, which we are constantly meeting with among Johnson's "Prayers and Meditations," are exquisitely signi-

ficant, and should always be noted well; for they indicate, as nothing else could, the spirit in which all this man's work was perfirmed. It could not fail to be sound work, since the Highest was always conceived as working along with him.

The following extract from a letter to Dr. Joseph Warton, brother of the Rev. Thomas, in reference to the poet Collins, who was then pining away under a kind of mental imbecility, which was not exactly madness but something almost worse, shows so much of heart on Johnson's part that we are happy to quote it here. The letter was written on the 8th of March, 1754:—

"But how little can we venture to exult in any intellectual powers or literary attainments, when we consider the condition of poor Collins! I knew him a few years ago full of hopes, and full of projects, versed in many languages, high in fancy, and strong in retention. This busy and forcible mind is now under the government of those, who lately could not have been able to comprehend the least and most narrow of his designs. What do you hear of him? Are there hopes of his recovery? or is he to pass the remainder of his life in misery and degradation? perhaps, with complete consciousness of his calamity."

In a subsequent letter (Dec. 24th, 1754) he again touches, most tenderly and with a strong *personal* feeling of poor Collins's case, on the same sad subject:—

"Poor dear Collins! Let me know whether you think it would give him pleasure if I should write to him. I have often been near his state, and therefore have it in great commiseration."

Collins had come to London about 1744, "a literary adventurer," as Johnson writes, "with many projects in his head and very little money in his pockets." The two met for the first time soon after, became friends, and, we may readily fancy, may have spent many a day "without a dinner" together. The days of one of them, at all events—with or without a dinner—are now nearly done.

In the summer of this year Johnson paid a visit to Oxford ostensibly for the purpose of consulting the libraries there, but perhaps *really* for the anticipated pleasure of seeing his old Alma

Mater once more. At any rate, he gathered nothing in the libraries for his forthcoming work. An interesting account of this visit was preserved by the Rev. Thomas Warton, now famous as the author of "The History of English Poetry," and with whom Johnson spent most of his time during the five weeks he stayed at Oxford:—

"When Johnson came to Oxford in 1754, the long vacation was beginning, and most people were leaving the place. This was the first time of his being there, after quitting the University. next morning after his arrival, he wished to see his old college, I went with him. He was highly pleased to find all Pembroke. the college-servants which he had left there still remaining, particularly a very old butler; and expressed great satisfaction at being recognised by them, and conversed with them familiarly. He waited on the master, Dr. Radcliffe, who received him very coldly. Johnson at least expected that the master would order a copy of his Dictionary, now near publication; but the master did not choose to talk on the subject, never asked Johnson to dine, nor even to visit him while he stayed at Oxford. After we had left the lodgings Johnson said to me, 'There lives a man, who lives by the revenues of literature, and will not move a finger to If I come to live at Oxford I shall take up my abode support it. at Trinity.' We then called on the Rev. Mr. Meeke, one of the fellows, and of Johnson's standing. Here was a most cordial greeting on both sides. On leaving him, Johnson said, 'I used to think Meeke had excellent parts, when we were boys together at the college: but, alas!

"Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!"

I remember, at the classical lecture in the Hall, I could not bear Meeke's superiority, and I tried to sit as far from him as I could, that I might not hear him construe.'

"As we were leaving the college, he said, 'Here I translated Pope's Messiah. Which do you think is the best line in it?—My own favourite is,

[&]quot; Vallis aromaticas fundit Saronica nubes."

I told him, I thought it a very sonorous hexameter. I did not tell him, it was not in the Virgilian style. He much regretted that his first tutor was dead; for whom he seemed to retain the He said, 'I once had been a whole morning sliding in Christ-Church meadows, and missed his lecture in logic. After dinner he sent for me to his room. I expected a sharp rebuke for my idleness, and went with a beating heart. When we were seated, he told me he had sent for me to drink a glass of wine with him, and to tell me, he was not angry with me for missing his lecture. This was, in fact, a most severe reprimand. Some more of the boys were then sent for, and we spent a very Besides Mr. Meeke, there was only one pleasant afternoon.' other fellow of Pembroke now resident: from both of whom Johnson received the greatest civilities during this visit, and they pressed him very much to have a room in the college.

"In the course of this visit, Johnson and I walked three or four times to Ellesfield, a village beautifully situated about three miles from Oxford, to see Mr. Wise, Radclivian librarian, with whom Johnson was much pleased. At this place, Mr. Wise had fitted up a house and gardens, in a singular manner, but with great taste. Here was an excellent library, particularly a valuable collection of books in Northern literature, with which Johnson was often very busy. One day Mr. Wise read to us a dissertation which he was preparing for the press, entitled, 'A History and Chronology of the Fabulous Ages.' Some old divinities of Thrace, related to the Titans, and called the Cabiri, made a very important part of the theory of this piece; and in conversation afterwards, Mr. Wise talked much of his Cabiri. As we returned to Oxford in the evening, I outwalked Johnson, and he cried out Sufflamina, a Latin word, which came from his mouth with peculiar grace, and was as much as to say, Put on your drag chain. Before we got home, I again walked too fast for him; and he now cried out, 'Why, you walk as if you were pursued by all the Cabiri in a body.' In an evening we frequently took long walks from Oxford into the country, returning to supper. Once, in our way home, we viewed the ruins of the abbeys of Oseney and Rewley, near Oxford. After at least half an hour's silence, Johnson said,

'I viewed them with indignation!' We had then a long conversation on Gothic buildings; and in talking of the form of old halls, he said, 'In these halls, the fire-place was anciently always in the middle of the room, till the Whigs removed it on one side.' About this time there had been an execution of two or three criminals at Oxford, on a Monday. Soon afterwards, one day at dinner, I was saying that Mr. Swinton, the chaplain of the gaol, and also a frequent preacher before the University, a learned man, but often thoughtless and absent, preached the condemnation sermon on repentance, before the convicts, on the preceding day, Sunday; and that in the close he told his audience that he should give them the remainder of what he had to say on the subject, the next Lord's day. Upon which, one of our company, a Doctor of Divinity, and a plain matter-of-fact man, by way of offering an apology for Mr. Swinton, gravely remarked, that he had probably preached the same sermon before the University: 'Yes, sir,' says Johnson, 'but the University were not to be hanged the next morning.'

"I forgot to observe before, that when he left Mr. Meeke (as I have told above), he added, 'About the same time of life, Meeke was left behind at Oxford to feed on a Fellowship, and I went to London to get my living: now, sir, see the difference of our literary characters!'"

And with this honest self-gratulation, on our Author's part, we shall suppose this Oxford visit to have terminated: only begging the reader's special attention to one sentence in the above account, which perhaps tells us more of Johnson the Man than all the rest put together:—" He was highly pleased to find all the college-servants which he had left there still remaining, particularly a very old butler; and expressed great satisfaction at being recognised by them, and conversed with them familiarly."

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHNSON AND THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD-M.A.-DICTIONARY
PUBLISHED.

(1754—1755.)

In 1754, the Dictionary would appear to have engaged almost the whole of Johnson's attention. The Plan of that work, it will be remembered, had been dedicated to the Earl of Chesterfield Directly or indirectly, that nobleman had led our Author to believe that he was his true friend, and would use his influence in favour of both him and his work. These promising hopes had proved vain; the Earl had steadily neglected the struggling author for years. But now, when the great work was about to be published, Chesterfield's friendship sprang up anew, and with wonderful suddenness. He wrote two papers in "The World," in laudation of Johnson and his forthcoming Dictionary : trusting, no doubt, that this literary puff would secure for himself the Dedication of the whole work, as his supposed friendship had already procured him that of the Plan. This was adding insult to injury, and Johnson was not the man to be injured or insulted with impunity. "Sir," said he, "after making great professions, he had, for many years, taken no notice of me; but when my Dictionary was coming out, he fell a-scribbling in 'The World' about it. Upon which I wrote him a letter expressed in civil terms, but such as might show him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him." words, Johnson found that the Earl's strong professions of regard had been a mere sham; and shams were the only things in the world he could never forgive. He could pardon a man for being a player, or even for being a Scotchman, but to an unmasked sham he would show no mercy—not though it came before him with a coronet on its brow. Here is the letter, famous now, and likely to remain for centuries yet one of the very finest pieces of work in all literature:—

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

" February 7, 1755.

"MY LORD,

"I have been lately informed by the proprietor of 'The World,' that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*; that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

"The shepherd in 'Virgil' grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I shall conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

"My lord, your lordship's most humble,
"Most obedient servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

If a letter like that does not "give the world assurance of a man," all writing is worse than vanity. There may be something of Latin in the language of it, but its spirit is genuine Saxon. is of the genus thorough British, and of the species pure Johnsonian. The peer has no chance with the poor bookseller's son when it is mind against mind, and not clothes against clothes. A sound thrashing in his own best room would not have mortified the great man as that scorching epistle must have done. " Blows are sarcasms turned stupid; wit is a form of force that leaves the limbs at rest." And there is more than wit here; there is dignity in every sentence of that letter, grace in its whole air, and finest scorn wrapping it round as with a garment. In a waggish mood, one would say that it is a clear case of a nobleman brought to the dust before a noble man. It is brains versus blood, and no doubt whatever as to the jury's decision. Yet, up through all the biting satire, proud contempt, and high sense of personal worth, mark how there wells a beautiful little spring of tender recollection in these touching words: "Till I am solitary, and cannot impart it." It would be difficult to prove that Johnson's wife ever died-to him: "multum amatam diuque defletam." To those whose mental picture of our hero is that of a rough, unkempt, "bearish" figure, exhibiting, perhaps, the possibility of softening a

little when stroked the right way of the hair, we beg leave to say that they have looked at Samuel Johnson with only half an eye, and with less than half a heart. Among many other things beautiful and grand, this man's life contains one of the finest love-episodes which fiction or fact has ever recorded.

"While this was the talk of the town," says Dr. Adams, in a letter to Boswell, "I happened to visit Dr. Warburton, who, finding that I was acquainted with Johnson, desired me earnestly to carry his compliments to him, and to tell him that he honoured him for his manly behaviour in rejecting these condescensions of Lord Chesterfield, and for resenting the treatment he had received from him with a proper spirit."

An interesting little fact should here be noted, as proving how much Johnson must have taken to heart the disappointment of his hopes of patronage from the Earl. In "The Vanity of Human Wishes," as first published, two of the lines ran thus:—

"Yet think what ills the scholar's life assail, Toil, envy, want, the garret, and the jail."

In all the editions published after the rupture the second line stands so:—

"Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail."

That Chesterfield himself must have swallowed this letter as if it had been a delicious mixture of gall and wormwood one can easily believe; but he always affected indifference. Dr. Adams once said to Dodsley that he was sorry Johnson had written his letter to Chesterfield. Dodsley said he was very sorry too, "for he had a property in the Dictionary, to which his Lordship's patronage might have been of consequence." He then told Dr. Adams that Lord Chesterfield had shown him the letter. "I should have imagined," replied Dr. Adams, "that Lord Chesterfield would have concealed it." "Poh!" said Dodsley, "do you think a letter from Johnson could hurt Lord Chesterfield? Not at all, sir. It lay upon his table, where anybody might see it. He read it to me; said, 'This man has great powers,' pointed out the severest passages, and observed how well they were ex-

pressed." But Chesterfield and dissimulation were always synonymous terms; and the Earl's air of unconcern was much too studied to be real. It sometimes happened, on the other hand, that he deigned rather to rebut the charges brought against him; saying that "he had heard Johnson had changed his lodgings, and did not know where he lived;" and, further, that "he would have turned off the best servant he ever had, if he had known that he denied him to a man who would have been always more than welcome," and so forth. Johnson, hearing all this, remarked to Dr. Adams, who was the Earl's mouthpiece for the time being: "Sir, that is not Lord Chesterfield; he is the proudest man this day existing." "No," said Dr. Adams, "there is one person, at least, as proud; I think, by your own account, you are the prouder man of the two." "But mine," replied Johnson, instantly, "was defensive pride." If you wish to take this man without his answer, you must take him without his tongue.

Johnson, being now quite relieved from any "burden of gratitude," so far as Chesterfield was concerned, ever after spoke his mind very freely about the courtly dissembler. "This man," said he, "I thought had been a lord among wits, but I find he is only a wit among lords!" That is magnificent. And when the nobleman's letters to his natural son were published, Johnson observed, "They teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing-master." That also is good, if things are to be called by their right names. The Earl, on his part, has gibbeted our Author in these very letters as "a respectable Hottentot." Boswell [to Johnson]: "Sir, there is one trait of that character which unquestionably does not belong to you: 'he throws his meat anywhere but down his throat.'" Johnson: "Sir, Lord Chesterfield never saw me eat in his life."

In course of time, however, Johnson seems to have desired that the circumstances connected with this Chesterfield affair should be hushed up as far as possible. On one occasion, for example, when greatly importuned to allow the letter to be read to a distinguished nobleman who was very anxious to hear it, Johnson refused to comply, saying, with a smile, "No, Sir, I have hurt the dog too much already." Our Author could distinguish

68 **M.**A.

between writing a letter to express the feelings of insulted worth, and showing off that letter to gratify what must have been, in most cases, a mere idle curiosity.

Towards the close of the year 1754 another effort was made by some of Johnson's friends to obtain for him, by special grant, the degree of Master of Arts from the University of Oxford. It was thought that these words would look well on the title-page of the Dictionary now nearly ready for publication. His friend Warton seems to have taken the liveliest interest in procuring for him this well-deserved honour.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

" Dec. 21, 1754.

" DEAR SIR,

"I am extremely sensible of the favour done me, both by Mr. Wise and yourself. The book [the Dictionary] cannot, I think, be printed in less than six weeks, nor probably so soon; and I will keep back the title-page for such an insertion as you seem to promise me. Be pleased to let me know what money I shall send you for bearing the expense of the affair; and I will take care that you have it ready at your hand.

"I had lately the favour of a letter from your brother, with some account of poor Collins, for whom I am much concerned. I have a notion, that, by very great temperance, or more properly abstinence, he may yet recover.

"I shall be extremely glad to hear from you again, to know if the affair proceeds. I have mentioned it to none of my friends, for fear of being laughed at for my disappointment.

"You know poor Mr. Dodsley has lost his wife; I believe he is much affected. I hope he will not suffer so much as I yet suffer for the loss of mine.

Οίμοι τι δ' οίμοι; θνητά γάρ πεπόνθαμεν.

I have ever since seemed to myself broken off from mankind; a kind of solitary wanderer in the wild of life, without any direction, or fixed point of view: a gloomy gazer on the world to which I nave little relation. Yet I would endeavour, by the help of you

and your brother, to supply the want of closer union by friendship: and hope to have long the pleasure of being,

"Dear Sir,
"Most affectionately yours,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

The effort promised to be successful this time, as the next letter will show:—

"TO THE REVEREND DR. HUDDESFORD,

"Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford; to be communicated to the Heads of Houses, and proposed in Convocation.

"Grosvenor Street, Feb 4th, 1755.

"MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND GENTLEMEN,

"Mr. Samuel Johnson, who was formerly of Pembroke College, having very eminently distinguished himself by the publication of a series of essays, excellently calculated to form the manners of the people, and in which the cause of religion and morality is everywhere maintained by the strongest powers of argument and language; and who shortly intends to publish a Dictionary of the English Tongue, formed on a new plan, and executed with the greatest labour and judgment; I persuade myself that I shall act agreeable to the sentiments of the whole University, in desiring that it may be proposed in convocation to confer on him the degree of Master of Arts by diploma, to which I readily give my consent, and am, Mr. Vice-Chancellor and Gentlemen,

"Your affectionate friend and servant, "ARRAN."

The diploma was granted forthwith, and the following letter despatched to his friend Warton, who would no doubt have liked to be the first to communicate the good news, but had been anticipated by another:—

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

" Feb. 1755.

"DEAR SIR,

"Dr. King was with me a few minutes before your letter; this, however, is the first instance in which your kind intentions to me have ever been frustrated. I have now the full effect of your care and benevolence; and am far from thinking it a slight honour, or a small advantage; since it will put the enjoyment of your conversation more frequently in the power of, dear Sir,

"Your most obliged and affectionate, "Sam. Johnson."

The Dictionary might now be sent forth full-sail upon the wide world—title-page and all.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"I wrote to you some weeks ago, but believe did not direct accurately, and therefore know not whether you had my letter. I would, likewise, write to your brother [Dr. Joseph Warton], but know not where to find him. I now begin to see land, after having wandered, according to Mr. Warburton's phrase, in this vast sea of words. What reception I shall meet with on the shore, I know not; whether the sound of bells, and acclamations of the people, which Ariosto talks of in his last canto, or a general murmur of dislike, I know not; whether I shall find upon the coast a Calypso that will court, or a Polypheme that wlll resist-But if Polypheme comes, have at his eye. I hope, however, the critics will let me be at peace; for though I do not much fear their skill and strength, I am a little afraid of myself, and would not willingly feel so much ill-will in my bosom as literary quarrels are apt to excite.

"There is nothing considerable done or doing among us here. We are not, perhaps, as innocent as villagers, but most of us seem to be as idle. I hope, however, you are busy; and should be glad to know what you are doing.

"I am, dearest Sir,
"Your humble Servant,
"Sam. JOHNSON."

"[London,] Fcb. 4, 1755."

The degree obtained, hopes high, brain in fine working order, the appearance of the magnum opus was at length announced. It will be remembered that Johnson had expected to be able to accomplish the work in three years; but eight had been required—and no wonder. The publishers had, however, been getting impatient, the more so as our Author had long ago received the whole price of the book. When the messenger who carried the last sheet to Millar (the active publisher) returned, Johnson asked him, "Well, what did he say?" "Sir," answered the messenger, "he said, 'Thank God, I have done with him.'" JOHNSON [with a smile]: "I am glad that he thanks God for anything."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

" May 6, 1755.

"SIR,

"It has been long observed that men do not suspect faults which they do not commit; your own elegance of manners, and punctuality of complaisance, did not suffer you to impute to me that negligence of which I was guilty, and [for] which I have not since atoned. I received both your letters, and received them with pleasure proportioned to the esteem which so short an acquaintance strongly impressed, and which I hope to confirm by nearer knowledge, though I am afraid that gratification will be for a time withheld.

"I have, indeed, published my book [his Dictionary], of which I beg to know your father's judgment, and yours; and I have now stayed long enough to watch its progress in the world. It has, you see, no patrons, and, I think, has yet had no opponents, except the critics of the coffee-house, whose outcries are soon dispersed into the air, and are thought on no more; from this, there

fore, I am at liberty, and think of taking the opportunity of this interval to make an excursion, and why not then into Lincolnshire? or, to mention a stronger attraction, why not to dear Mr. Langton? I will give the true reason, which I know you will approve:—I have a mother more than eighty years old, who has counted the days to the publication of my book, in hopes of seeing me; and to her, if I can disengage myself here, I am resolved to go.

"As I know, dear Sir, that to delay my visit for a reason like this, will not deprive me of your esteem, I beg it may not lessen your kindness. I have very seldom received an offer of friendship which I so earnestly desire to cultivate and mature. I shall rejoice to hear from you, till I can see you, and will see you as soon as I can; for when the duty that calls me to Lichfield is discharged, my inclination will carry me to Langton. I shall delight to hear the ocean roar, or see the stars twinkle, in the company of men to whom Nature does not spread her volumes or utter her voice in vain.

"Do not, dear Sir, make the slowness of this letter a precedent for delay, or imagine that I approve the incivility that I have committed; for I have known you enough to love you, and sincerely to wish a further knowledge; and I assure you once more, that to live in a house that contains such a father, and such a son, will be accounted a very uncommon degree of pleasure, by, dear Sir,

"Your most obliged,

"And most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

What we have to say of the Dictionary itself, now that the fierce light of the critical world has begun to beat upon it, must form the beginning of another chapter, and not the end of this one. Meanwhile, it is interesting to remark that, although joyous activity was the prevailing characteristic of Johnson's mental state about this period, a sharp note of melancholy rings out of the closing sentences of the Preface to the Dictionary. "I," says he, "may surely be contented without the praise of perfection,

which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave; and success and miscarriage are empty sounds. I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise." The spirit of his dead wife must have been haunting him once again as he wrote these words. There is in them, also, a touch of that soul-sadness which takes possession of an author almost always when bidding adieu to a work which has engaged his thought and feeling long and passionately. A great slice of his life has been cut away, and the future may have nothing in store to heal the breach. "In every parting," be it only parting with a book, "there is an image of death."

CHAPTER IX.

MORE ABOUT THE DICTIONARY-LETTERS-"THE IDLER."

(1755—1758.)

THOSE who are familiar with Johnson's Dictionary only in one or other of the many forms in which it has been put into the hands of schoolboys will probably be surprised to find it pronounced a great work; yet, in its original and complete shape, it is not simply a great work, it is a real thing of genius. labour, solid learning, massive understanding, subtle analysis, bright-eyed intelligence, all these, and much else, have combined to rear a structure which must always remain as an enduring monument of British industry, intellect, and "pluck." author himself once told a company that the Academy della Crusca could scarcely believe that it had been done by one man. Criticism of the book is not required here; it is not necessary to point out its faults and deficiencies, nor to inquire how far it has been legitimately superseded by subsequent works which have either sprung out of it or been based upon it. To us, now-adays, perhaps the most important fact in connection with the work is the decided impress which every page of it has taken of the author's own marked personalty. The Dictionary is Dr. Johnson all over and all through. The whole conception of it was gigantic, like himself; and the execution was, all things considered, not unworthy of the Plan. The definitions especially, in point of clearness, sharpness of outline, weight, and logical precision, have never been equalled; and all the later dictionaries which have discarded Johnson seem, in this department, thin and meagre to an extreme degree. The Doctor himself was quite conscious of the defects of his work, but this consciousness did not overwhelm him with shame. A lady once asked him how he

came to define Pastern the knee of a horse; he immediately answered, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance." The lady must have been silenced on the spot. It fared still worse with another lady who once said to him: "I am glad, Doctor, that you have kept out all the nasty words."-JOHNSON: "O, then, Madam, you have been looking for them?" Some of the definitions are the outcome of a sense of dry humour, and good-humour too, which it is delicious to perceive. Thus: "Grub-street, the name of a street in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called Grub-street." Or thus: "Lexicographer, a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge." "Oats" he defines as, "A grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people." Our Scotch blood got up at this heinous insult; many replies were made, but the good-natured retort of Lord Elibank "Yes," said he; "and where will you find such won the palm. horses and such men?" Ill-nature also found vent in some of "Excise" is thus defined: "A hateful tax levied the definitions. upon commodities, and adjudged, not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom Excise is paid." Johnson was a staunch Tory, and hated, of course, Walpole and the Whig Excise-Act. There was some thought of bringing an action against him for this definition; but it was deemed more prudent to let the matter drop, and Johnson never made the slightest alteration on the obnoxious passage. "Pension" is defined, "An allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England, it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state-hireling for treason to his country." But if the next had got in it would have beat all the rest hollow. "You know, sir," (he said to Boswell twenty years after this) "Lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word renegado, after telling that it meant 'one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter,' I added, Sometimes we say a Gower. Thus it went to the press; but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out."

The work altogether was a triumph, and was ultimately acknowledged to be so by almost all competent judges. Here is

a characteristic critique of it by our lively acquaintance, David Garrick:—

"On Johnson's Dictionary.

"Talk of war with a Briton, he'll boldly advance,
That one English soldier will beat ten of France;
Would we alter the boast from the sword to the pen,
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men;
In the deep mines of science though Frenchmen may toil,
Can their strength be compared to Locke, Newton, and Boyle?
Let them rally their heroes, send forth all their pow'rs,
Their verse-men and prose-men, then match them with ours!
First Shakespeare and Milton, like Gods in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epic to flight;
In satires, epistles, and odes, would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope;
And Johnson, well-arm'd, like a hero of yore,
Has beat forty French, and will beat forty more!"

In the July of this year Johnson had formed some new scheme of mental improvement, as appears from one of his "Prayers and Meditations," entitled "On the Study of Philosophy, as an instrument of living;" but sincerity constrained him afterwards to add this note: "This study was not pursued."

On the 13th day of the same month he wrote in his Journal the following plan of life for Sundays: "Having lived, not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet without that attention to its religious duties which Christianity requires:"

- "1. To rise early, and, in order to it, to go to sleep early on Saturday.
 - "2. To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning.
- "3. To examine the tenor of my life, and particularly the last week: and to mark my advances in religion, or recession from it.
- "4. To read the Scripture methodically with such helps as are at hand.
 - " 5. To go to church twice.
 - "6. To read books of Divinity, either speculative or practical.
 - "7. To instruct my family.
- "8. To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week."

This scheme, also, may fall down by-and-by; but it is good so long as it stands, and the impulse to build is *the* thing for us to consider.

The fame which the Dictionary procured for its author may be said to have been unbounded; but the money it brought him in was a very definite quantity—and it was all gone by this time. From a letter of his to Samuel Richardson we find he was arrested for debt this year, and that Richardson became his surety. Boswell once said to him, "I am sorry, sir, you did not get more for your Dictionary."—JOHNSON: "I am sorry too. But it was The booksellers are generous, liberal-minded men." Johnson did not blame the booksellers, but neither was he to blame himself. It must not be forgotten that the whole sum received for the work was 1575/., from which has to be deducted the expense of amanuenses, paper, &c,; and that this sum had to serve him for at least eight years, instead of three, as he had at first calculated. The only wonder is, therefore, that he had kept out of debt so long. Moreover, he had been ill during the winter, as we learn from a letter to Dr. Warton, in which he writes: -" For my part. I have not lately done much. I have been ill in the winter, and my eye has been inflamed; but I please myself with the hopes of doing many things, with which I have long pleased and deceived myself!"

In this state of mind and body he was not likely to forget a fellow-sufferer like Collins. Extract from a letter to Dr. Joseph Warton, dated April 9th, 1756: "What becomes of poor dear Collins? I wrote him a letter which he never answered. I suppose writing is very troublesome to him. That man is no common loss. The moralists all talk of the uncertainty of fortune, and the transitoriness of beauty: but it is yet more dreadful to consider that the powers of the mind are equally liable to change, that understanding may make its appearance and depart, that it may blaze and expire."

There will be no more letters about "poor dear Collins" now, for the miserable man expired not long after.

Johnson now began to contribute very largely to a periodical called "The Literary Magazine; or, Universal Review." One is

astounded at the number and variety of the subjects on which he wrote: "Warton's Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope;" "Russel's Natural History of Aleppo;" "Sir Isaac Newton's Arguments in proof of a Deity;" "Holme's Experiments on Bleaching;" "Browne's Christian Morals;" "Hales on Distilling Sea Water, Ventilators in Ships, and Curing an ill Taste in Milk;" "Letter on the Case of Admiral Byng;" "Hanway's Eight Days' Journey, and Essay on Tea;" "Lucas's Essay on Waters;" "A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil;" and fifty This year also he wrote the Dedication and Preface of a others. book upon the Game of Draughts; to such uses may the pen of a ready writer be turned! He is reported to have once said that he could write the Life of a Broomstick; and doubtless he could. His review of the "Essay on Tea" ought to be a good one, for he dearly loved the beverage. The quantities of it he drank, at all hours of the day, would have shattered the nerves of almost any other man; but the Doctor's nerves were unhurt.

Johnson was quite aware that some of his dedications, prefaces, and introductions to other people's books were open to the charge of attempting to dignify trifles; but he was prepared to repel the accusation. In his dedication of the Draught Book to the Earl of Rochford he has the following sentence: "Triflers may find or make anything a trifle; but since it is the great characteristic of a wise man to see events in their causes, to obviate consequences, and ascertain contingencies, your lordship will think nothing a trifle by which the mind is inured to caution, foresight, and circumspection." A very shrewd plea for the lawfulness of chronicling small beer.

In addition to much work of this sort, he, this year, resumed his idea of publishing an edition of Shakespeare with Notes. So sanguine was he of a speedy consummation of his scheme, that he promised the book should be ready by the Christmas of 1757. Yet nine years were doomed to pass before it could be safely and completely delivered from his throbbing brain.

About this same time he was offered a living of considerable value, in Lincolnshire, if he felt disposed to enter the Church. It was a rectory in the gift of Mr. Langton, the father of his ines-

timable friend Bennet. He declined the offer; wisely, think we, who can now look back upon his whole life from the vantageground of a height of many years. We have not forgotten his midnight rambles with poor Savage, or his madcap frolics with young Beauclerk; and, while we are sure that his life and writings are powerful and telling sermons, we should not have liked to see him preaching them adorned with a gown and bands. A grand man Samuel Johnson was, and a good; but spiritually-minded, in any strict sense of the words-No. loved all life too passionately to shut himself up in the effort to cultivate only one kind of it. He never would have seen the Holy Grail, or cared much if he had; nor would Shakespeare, nor Burns, nor Scott, nor one or two others, who have nevertheless been as levers to uplift the world. At the same time, many a man, in his circumstances, would have seized the opportunity. and thought he did God service by spoiling the life of one of His creatures. "Fruit is Seed;" Johnson had not sown for the Church, and therefore did not feel that he ought to reap a benefice: but only a strong man can help feeling so, at such critical moments.

The following letters will tell their own story, and Johnson's, without much comment of ours.

Mr. Charles Burney, who afterwards distinguished himself in the science of music, and obtained a degree from the University of Oxford, had introduced himself to our Author more than two years ago, in a letter warmly approving of the Plan of the Dictionary, and inquiring as to the time and manner of its publication. Johnson had sent him a very courteous reply; and the correspondence had gone on, in an intermittent sort of way, until now, when the following letter was written:—

"TO MR. BURNEY, IN LYNNE, NORFOLK.

" Gough Square, Dec. 24, 1757.

"SIR,

"That I may show myself sensible of your favours, and not commit the same fault a second time, I make haste to answer the letter which I received this morning. The truth is, the other

likewise was received, and I wrote an answer; but being desirous to transmit you some proposals and receipts, I waited till I could find a convenient conveyance, and day was passed after day, till other things drove it from my thoughts; yet not so, but that I remember with great pleasure your commendation of my Dictionary. Your praise was welcome, not only because I believe it was sincere, but because praise has been very scarce. A man of your candour will be surprised when I tell you, that among all my acquaintance there were only two, who upon the publication of my book did not endeavour to depress me with threats of censure from the public, or with objections learned from those who had learned them from my own preface. Yours is the only letter of good-will that I have received; though, indeed, I am promised something of that sort from Sweden.

"How my new edition [of Shakespeare] will be received I know not; the subscription has not been very successful. I shall publish about March.

"If you can direct me how to send proposals, I should wish that they were in such hands.

"I remember, sir, in some of the first letters with which you favoured me, you mentioned your lady. May I inquire after her? In return for the favours which you have shown me, it is not much to tell you, that I wish you and her all that can conduce to your happiness.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most obliged and humble servant, "Sam. Johnson."

The next is a magnificent letter: sunshiny, witty, brilliant even—in the Doctor's very finest style:—

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"Jan. 9, 1758.

"DEAREST SIR,

"I must have indeed slept very fast not to have been awakened by your letter. None of your suspicions are true; I am not much richer than when you left me; and, what is worse, my omission of an answer to your first letter, will prove that I am not

much wiser. But I go on as I formerly did, designing to be some time or other both rich and wise: and yet cultivate neither mind nor fortune. Do you take notice of my example, and learn the danger of delay. When I was as you are now, towering in confidence of twenty-one, little did I suspect that I should be at forty-nine what I now am.

"But you do not seem to need my admonition. You are busy in acquiring and in communicating knowledge, and while you are studying, enjoy the end of study, by making others wiser and happier. I was much pleased with the tale that you told me of being tutor to your sisters. I, who have no sisters nor brothers, look with some degree of innocent envy on those who may be said to be born to friends; and cannot see, without wonder, how rarely that native union is afterwards regarded. It sometimes, indeed, happens, that some supervenient cause of discord may overpower this original amity; but it seems to me more frequently thrown away with levity, or lost by negligence, than destroyed by injury or violence. We tell the ladies that good wives make good husbands: I believe it is a more certain position that good brothers make good sisters.

"I am satisfied with your stay at home, as Juvenal with his friend's retirement to Cumæ: I know that your absence is best, though it be not best for me.

4 Quamvis digressu veteris confusus amici, Laudo tamen vacuis quod sedem figere Cumis Destinet, atque unum civem donare Sibyllæ.

"Langton is a good Cumæ, but who must be Sibylla? Mrs. Langton is as wise as Sibyl, and as good; and will live, if my wishes can prolong life, till she shall in time be as old. But she differs in this, that she has not scattered her precepts in the wind, at least not those which she bestowed upon you.

"The two Wartons just looked into the town, and were taken to see 'Cleone,' where David [Garrick] says, they were starved for want of company to keep them warm. David and Doddy [Dodsley] have had a new quarrel, and, I think, cannot conveniently quarrel any more. 'Cleone' was well acted by all the

characters, but Bellamy left nothing to be desired. I went the first night, and supported it as well as I might; for Doddy, you know, is my patron, and I would not desert him. The play was very well received. Doddy, after the danger was over, went every night to the stage-side, and cried at the distress of poor *Cleone*.

"I have left off housekeeping, and therefore made presents of the game which you were pleased to send me. The pheasant I gave to Mr. Richardson, the bustard to Dr. Lawrence, and the pot I placed with Miss Williams, to be eaten by myself. She desires that her compliments and good wishes may be accepted by the family; and I make the same request for myself.

"Mr. Reynolds has within these few days raised his price to twenty guineas a head, and Miss is much employed in miniatures. I know not anybody [else] whose prosperity has increased since you left them.

"Murphy is to have his 'Orphan of China' acted next month; and is therefore, I suppose, happy. I wish I could tell you of any great good to which I was approaching, but at present my prospects do not much delight me; however, I am always pleased when I find that you, dear sir, remember

"Your affectionate, humble servant,
"Sam. Johnson."

"TO MR. BURNEY, AT LYNNE, NORFOLK.

"London, March 8, 1758.

"SIR,

"Your kindness is so great, and my claim to any particular regard from you so little, that I am at a loss how to express my sense of your favours; but I am, indeed, much pleased to be thus distinguished by you.

"I am ashamed to tell you that my Shakespeare will not be out so soon as I promised my subscribers; but I did not promise them more than I promised myself. It will, however, be published before summer.

"I have sent you a bundle of proposals, which, I think, do not profess more than I have hitherto performed. I have printed

many of the plays, and have hitherto left very few passages unexplained: where I am quite at a loss, I confess my ignorance, which is seldom done by commentators.

"I have, likewise, enclosed receipts; not that I mean to impose upon you the trouble of pushing them with more importunity than may seem proper, but that you may rather have more than fewer than you shall want. The proposals you will disseminate as there shall be an opportunity. I once printed them at length in the 'Chronicle,' and some of my friends (I believe Mr. Murphy, who formerly wrote the 'Gray's-Inn Journal') introduced them with a splendid encomium.

"Since the 'Life of Browne,' I have been a little engaged, from time to time, in the 'Literary Magazine,' but not very lately. I have not the collection by me, and therefore cannot draw out a catalogue of my own parts, but will do it, and send it. Do not buy them, for I will gather all those that have anything of mine in them, and send them to Mrs. Burney, as a small token of gratitude for the regard which she is pleased to bestow upon me.

"I am, sir, your most obliged

"And most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Johnson had ceased to write in the "Universal Review;" its success thereupon received a great check; and in July, this year, it died outright.

The following account of a visit which Burney paid to Johnson about this time will read best in the visitor's own words:—

"Soon after this, Mr. Burney, during a visit to the capital, had an interview with him in Gough-square, where he dined and drank tea with him, and was introduced to the acquaintance of Mrs. Williams. After dinner, Mr. Johnson proposed to Mr. Burney to go up with him into his garret, which being accepted, he there found about five or six Greek folios, a deal writing-desk, and a chair and a half. Johnson giving to his guest the entire seat, tottered himself on one with only three legs and one arm. Here he gave Mr. Burney Mrs. Williams's history, and showed him some volumes of Shakespeare already printed, to prove that he was in

earnest. Upon Mr. Burney's opening the first volume, at the 'Merchant of Venice,' he observed to him, that he seemed to be more severe on Warburton than Theobald. 'O poor Tib,' said Johnson, 'he was ready knocked down to my hands; Warburton stands between me and him.' 'But, sir,' said Mr. Burney, 'you'll have Warburton upon your bones, won't you?' 'No, sir, he'll not come out: he'll only growl in his den.' 'But you think, sir, that Warburton is a superior critic to Theobald?' 'O, sir, he'd make two-and-fifty Theobalds, cut into slices! The worst of Warburton is, that he has a rage for saying something, when there's nothing to be said.'-Mr. Burney then asked him whether he had seen the letter which Warburton had written in answer to a pamphlet, addressed, 'To the most impudent man alive.' He answered in the negative. Mr. Burney told him it was supposed The controversy now raged between the to be written by Mallet. friends of Pope and Bolingbroke: and Warburton and Mallet were the leaders of the several parties. Mr. Burney asked him then if he had seen Warburton's book against Bolingbroke's Philosophy? 'No, sir; I have never read Bolingbroke's impiety, and therefore am not interested about its confutation."

Four years previously, when Bolingbroke's posthumous work was first given to the world, Johnson had said, in ever-memorable words: "Sir, he was a scoundrel and a coward: a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half-acrown to a beggarly Scotchman to draw the trigger after his death!"

On the 15th of April, 1758, our Author began a new series of papers, called "The Idler," which were published every Saturday in "The Universal Chronicle or Weekly Gazette." These essays, one hundred and three in number, were continued till April 5th, 1760. Three of the papers were written by Mr. Thomas Warton, one by Mr. Langton, and three by Sir Joshua Reynolds. "The Idler" is easier and more familiar than "The Rambler," both in style and subjects. The spur which set the Doctor to work upon it peeps out in one of his "Prayers and Meditations" of this period: "This year I hope to learn diligence." Many of the essays

were composed very hurriedly. Mr. Langton used to tell that Johnson, during a visit to Oxford, asked him one evening how long it was till the post went out, and, on learning, that it left in half-an-hour, exclaimed, "Then we shall do very well." Thereupon he sat down and finished an Idler on the spot. Mr. Langton having requested permission to read it, Johnson said, "Sir, you shall not do more than I have done myself." He then folded it and sent it off to London. The fine Rambler on Procrastination had been composed in an equal hurry, in Sir Joshua Reynolds's parlour, while the boy waited to carry it to press: a splendid practical illustration of the subject of the essay.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

" London, June 1, 1758.

"DEAR SIR,

"You will receive this by Mr. Baretti, a gentleman particularly entitled to the notice and kindness of the Professor of poesy. He has time but for a short stay, and will be glad to have it filled up with as much as he can hear and see.

"In recommending another to your favour, I ought not to omit thanks for the kindness which you have shown to myself. Have you any more notes on Shakespeare? I shall be glad of them.

"I see your pupil [Mr. Langton] sometimes; his mind is as exalted as his stature. I am half afraid of him; but he is no less amiable than formidable. He will, if the forwardness of his spring be not blasted, be a credit to you and to the University. He brings some of my plays with him, which he has my permission to show you, on condition you will hide them from everybody else.

"I am, dear sir, &c.,
"Sam. Johnson."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., TRINITY COLLEGE.

"June 28, 1758.

"DEAR SIR,

"Though I might have expected to hear from you, upon your entrance into a new state of life at a new place, yet recollecting (not without some degree of shame) that I owe you a letter upon an old account, I think it my part to write first. This, indeed, I do not only from complaisance, but from interest; for living on in the old way, I am very glad of a correspondent so capable as yourself, to diversify the hours. You have, at present, too many novelties about you to need any help from me to drive along your time.

"I know not anything more pleasant, or more instructive, than to compare experience with expectation, or to register from time to time the difference between idea and reality. It is by this kind of observation that we grow daily less liable to be disappointed. You, who are very capable of anticipating futurity, and raising phantoms before your own eyes, must often have imagined to yourself an academical life, and have conceived what would be the manners, the views, and the conversation, of men devoted to letters; how they would choose their companions, how they would direct their studies, and how they would regulate their lives. Let me know what you expected, and what you have found. At least record it to yourself before custom has reconciled you to the scenes before you, and the disparity of your discoveries to your hopes has vanished from your mind. It is a rule never to be forgotten, that whatever strikes strongly, should be described while the first impression remains fresh upon the mind.

"I love, dear sir, to think on you, and therefore should willingly write more to you, but that the post will not now give me leave to do more than send my compliments to Mr. Warton, and tell you that I am, dear sir, most affectionately,

"Your very humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Major-General Alexander Dury, of the first regiment of footguards, had fallen in the gallant discharge of his duty near St. Cas in the unfortunate expedition against France, in 1758. His lady and Mr. Langton's mother were sisters. The news of this event occasioned the following beautiful letter of sympathy from Johnson to his friend:—

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

" Sept. 21, 1758.

"DEAR SIR,

"I should be sorry to think that what engrosses the attention of my friend should have no part of mine. Your mind is now full of the fate of Dury; but his fate is past, and nothing remains but to try what reflection will suggest to mitigate the terrors of a violent death, which is more formidable at the first glance, than on a nearer and more steady view. A violent death is never very painful; the only danger is, lest it should be unprovided. a man can be supposed to make no provision for death in war, what can be the state that would have awakened him to the care of futurity? When would that man have prepared himself to die, who went to seek death without preparation? What then can be the reason why we lament more, him that dies of a wound, than him that dies of a fever? A man that languishes with disease, ends his life with more pain, but with less virtue: he leaves no example to his friends, nor bequeaths any honour to his descendants. The only reason why we lament a soldier's death, is, that we think he might have lived longer; yet this cause of grief is common to many other kinds of death, which are not so passionately bewailed. The truth is, that every death is violent which is the effect of accident; every death which is not gradually brought on by the miseries of age; or when life is extinguished for any other reason than that it is burnt out. He that dies before sixty, of a cold or consumption, dies, in reality, by a violent death; yet his death is borne with patience, only because the cause of his untimely end is silent and invisible. Let us endeavour to see things as they are, and then inquire whether we ought to complain. Whether to see life as it is, will give us much consolation, I know

88

not; but the consolation which is drawn from truth, if any there be, is solid and durable: that which may be derived from error, must be, like its original, fallacious and fugitive.

"I am, dear sir,
"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

With this note of sympathy closes our record of the year 1758.

CHAPTER X.

HIS MOTHER'S DEATH-"RASSELAS"-HIS NEGRO SERVANT.

(1759—1760.)

In the month of January, 1759, the depths of Johnson's heart were again stirred by the death of his mother, whom he had always tenderly loved and dutifully cared for. The event affected him greatly. Sir John Hawkins, in his "Life of Johnson," gives this charitable account of our Author's grief: "His mind had acquired no firmness by the contemplation of mortality." Extending a like charity to Sir John himself, we would say that the worthy knight's philosophy must have got the better of even the ordinary feelings of humanity when he wrote such words. Had Johnson been a man stoical enough to let his aged mother drop into the grave without a tear, we should hardly have been tempted to re-cast his biography just now. In the belief that our readers differ from Sir John, and belong to another school of philosophy, we give the following letters, which our Author wrote to his dying parent, and his stepdaughter Miss Porter, who attended his mother through her last illness. Their simple pathos would be spoilt by comment.

"TO MRS. JOHNSON, IN LICHFIELD.

" Jan. 13, 1759.

"Honoured Madam,

"The account which Miss [Porter] gives me of your health pierces my heart. God comfort, and preserve you, and save you, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

"I would have Miss read to you from time to time the Passion of our Saviour, and sometimes the sentences in the Communion Service, beginning, Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

- "I have just now read a physical book, which inclines me to think that a strong infusion of the bark would do you good. Do, dear mother, try it.
- "Pray, send me your blessing, and forgive all that I have done amiss to you. And whatever you would have done, and what debts you would have paid first, or anything else that you would direct, let Miss put it down; I shall endeavour to obey you.
- "I have got twelve guineas to send you, but unhappily am at a loss how to send it to-night. If I cannot send it to-night, it will come by the next post.
- "Pray, do not omit anything mentioned in this letter. God bless you for ever and ever.

"I am,
"Your dutiful son,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO MISS PORTER, AT MRS. JOHNSON'S, IN LICHFIELD.

" Jan. 16, 1759.

"MY DEAR MISS,

- "I think myself obliged to you beyond all expression of gratitude for your care of my dear mother. God grant it may not be without success. Tell Kitty, that I shall never forget her tenderness for her mistress. Whatever you can do continue to do. My heart is very full.
- "I hope you received twelve guineas on Monday. I found a way of sending them by means of the Postmaster, after I had written my letter, and hope they came safe. I will send you more in a few days. God bless you all.

"I am, my dear,

"Your most obliged and most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Over the leaf is a letter to my mother."

" Jan. 16, 1759.

"DEAR HONOURED MOTHER,

"Your weakness afflicts me beyond what I am willing to communicate to you. I do not think you unfit to face death, but

I know not how to bear the thought of losing you. Endeavour to do all you [can] for yourself. Eat as much as you can.

"I pray often for you; do you pray for me. I have nothing to add to my last letter.

"I am, dear, dear mother,

"Your dutiful son,

"SAM, JOHNSON."

"TO MRS. JOHNSON, IN LICHFIELD.

" Jan. 18, 1759.

"DEAR HONOURED MOTHER,

"I fear you are too ill for long letters; therefore I will only tell you, you have from me all the regard that can possibly subsist in the heart. I pray God to bless you for evermore, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"Let Miss write to me every post, however short. I am, dear mother,

"Your dutiful son,

"Sam. Johnson."

"TO MISS PORTER, AT MRS. JOHNSON'S, IN LICHFIELD.

" Jan. 20, 1759.

"DEAR MISS,

"I will, if it be possible, come down to you. God grant that I may yet [find] my dear mother breathing and sensible. Do not tell her, lest I disappoint her. If I miss to write next post, I am on the road. I am, my dearest Miss,

"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

On the other side.

" Jan. 20, 1759.

"DEAR HONOURED MOTHER,

"Neither your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and I believe the best woman in the world. I thank you for your indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all that I have done ill, and all that I have omitted to do well. God grant you his Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Lord Jesus receive your spirit. Amen. I am, dear, dear mother,

"Your dutiful son,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

So also, in the prayer which he composed on this sad occasion: "Almighty God, Merciful Father, in whose hands are life and death, sanctify unto me the sorrow which I now feel. Forgive me whatever I have done unkindly to my mother, and whatever I have omitted to do kindly. Make me to remember her good precepts and good example, and to reform my life according to Thy holy word."

Mrs. Johnson probably died on the 20th or 21st of the month; and she was buried on the day when the next letter was written:—

"TO MISS PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

" Jan. 23, 1759.

"You will conceive my sorrow for the loss of my mother—of the best mother. If she were to live again, surely I should behave better to her. But she is happy, and what is past is nothing to her; and for me, since I cannot repair my faults to her, I hope repentance will efface them. I return you and all those that have been good to her, my sincerest thanks, and pray God to repay you all with infinite advantage. Write to me, and comfort me, dear child. I shall be glad, likewise, if Kitty will write to me. I shall send a bill of twenty pounds in a few days, which I thought to have brought to my mother; but God suffered it not. I have not power or composure to say much more. God bless you, and bless us all.

" I am, dear Miss,

"Your affectionate humble servant, "Sam. Johnson."

We would not linger over these sorrowful scenes as if it were our intention to exhibit Johnson in an interesting situation; yet we cannot think of the great strong man in his hour of deep distress, without being touched with indignation at the thought of the false

ideas of Johnson's coarseness and want of feeling that have been so long abroad. What do people mean when they use such words in speaking of a man like this? There is no acting in letters like those: they are straight from the heart, and no common heart either. If they are authentic, all this of Johnson's coarseness and the rest vanishes into air. A coarse nature cannot be moved thus, even by the death of the nearest and dearest. Mark also that this sorrow is manly in its expression of itself: Johnson does not whimper, or blubber, or whine, when his soul is wounded; he only weeps a kind of silent tears, and utters a few great and simple words. Only the most profound natures can mourn so. How childlike, too, with all its profundity, is this grief! "Forgive me whatever I have done unkindly to my mother, and whatever I have omitted to do kindly." In its almost infantile simplicity that tender petition recalls to one's mind some of the lines in "The Child's First Grief." For feeling is always young; and, in the critical moments of life, the feelings of the man are not widely different from those of the child. " The little waves make the large ones, and are of the same pattern:" they only come up again vaster in volume and mightier in swell.

To pay the expenses of his mother's funeral and a few debts she had left, Johnson wrote his next great work, "Rasselas," which was published in March or April, 1759. He composed it in the evenings of one week, sent it to the press in portions as it was written, and never looked into it again until many years afterwards, when he found it accidentally in a chaise, and read it eagerly. He received for this work £100, and, on its reaching a second edition, £25 more.

Judged by our modern standards, "Rasselas" can hardly be considered a work of high art; yet it is a captivating book. Nor can the "Prince of Abyssinia" be regarded as a novel, unless the meaning of that word be largely stretched on purpose to take it in. It is simply a great moral treatise, over the pages of which a sort of grave moral imagination has cast a gloomy grandeur which makes it one of the most impressive tales ever written. We read it first in our early boyhood, and the air of that first reading seems to hang about us yet.

When enumerating the members of our Author's household in a former chapter, we made no mention of his negro attendant, Francis Barber; but this dusky gentleman now became a kind of silent actor in an amusing episode in which Johnson and two or three others played the prominent parts. Let the curtain rise with the despatch of the following letter, from Tobias Smollett, author of "Humphry Clinker," to Mr. John Wilkes:—

"Chelsea, March 16, 1759.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am again your petitioner, in behalf of that great CHAM of literature, Samuel Johnson. His black servant, whose name is Francis Barber, has been pressed on board the Stag frigate, Captain Angel, and our lexicographer is in great distress. He says. the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady in his throat, which renders him very unfit for his Majesty's service. You know what matter of animosity the said Johnson has against you: and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it, than that of laying him under an obligation. He was humble enough to desire my assistance on this occasion, though he and I were never cater-cousins; and I gave him to understand that I would make application to my friend Mr. Wilkes, who, perhaps, by his interest with Dr. Hay and Mr. Elliot, might be able to procure the discharge of his lacquey. would be superfluous to say more on the subject, which I leave to your own consideration; but I cannot let slip this opportunity of declaring that I am, with the most inviolable esteem and attachment, dear Sir,

"Your affectionate, obliged, humble servant,
"T. SMOLLETT."

Francis had not been "pressed on board," as Smollett understood, but had gone on board quite of his own accord. master, and not the man, who had determined to obtain a discharge; for Johnson abhorred the very imagination of a sailor's "No man," he said, "will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned." And at another time he added, "A man in a jail has more room, better food, and commonly better company." The influence of Mr. Wilkes was great enough to procure the lad's discharge; and Francis was astonished to find himself set free without any wish of his own. He found his old master in Chambers in the Inner Temple, and returned to his service. Death stept in between the two at last; but they remained together from this time onward to the inevitable parting. This is one of the most characteristic and beautiful and touching incidents in Johnson's career.

According to pious use and wont, our Author had this year contemplated some new scheme of life, as appears from a passage in the "Prayers and Meditations:" "the change of outward things which I am now to make." But no change ensued: at least no "outward change" did.

In 1760, George the Third ascended the throne of Great Britain. Johnson's contribution to the thousand-and-one loyal congratulations which greeted the new monarch's down-sitting was, "An Address of the Painters to George III. on his accession to the Throne of these Kingdoms." It is well to mention, once for all, that our Author was constantly writing Prefaces, Introductions, Dedications, &c., entirely for the benefit of others. The amount of good he did in this way to struggling men, and in support of charitable schemes, is incalculable, and should always be remembered to the credit of his humanity, which was as broad as it was deep. He never dedicated any of his own works—his pride prevented him; but he used to say that he believed he had dedicated, in the name of others, "to all the Royal Family round." No subject came amiss, if it were not immoral: he once dedicated some music for the German flute to Edward, Duke of York. In

this sort of writing he by no means considered himself as speaking in propria persona.

This year, however, he must either have been very idle, or very busy with his long-promised Shakespeare; for scarcely any trace of his work during these months has been discovered.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY,
LINCOLNSHIRE.

" Oct. 18, 1760.

"DEAR SIR,

"You that travel about the world have more materials for letters than I, who stay at home; and should, therefore, write with frequency equal to your opportunities. I should be glad to have all England surveyed by you, if you would impart your observations in narratives as agreeable as your last. Knowledge is always to be wished to those who can communicate it well. While you have been riding and running, and seeing the tombs of the learned, and the camps of the valiant, I have only stayed at home, and intended to do great things, which I have not done. Beau [Beauclerk] went away to Cheshire, and has not yet found his way back. Chambers passed the vacation at Oxford.

"I am very sincerely solicitous for the preservation or curing of Mr. Langton's sight, and am glad that the chirurgeon at Coventry gives him so much hope. Mr. Sharpe is of opinion that the tedious maturation of the cataract is a vulgar error, and that it may be removed as soon as it is formed. This notion deserves to be considered; I doubt whether it be universally true; but if it be true in some cases, and those cases can be distinguished, it may save a long and uncomfortable delay.

"Of dear Mrs. Langton you give me no account; which is the less friendly, as you know how highly I think of her, and how much I interest myself in her health. I suppose you told her of my opinion, and likewise suppose it was not followed; however, I still believe it to be right.

"Let me hear from you again, wherever you are, or whatever you are doing; whether you wander or sit still, plant trees or make Rustics, play with your sisters or muse alone; and in return I will

tell you the success of Sheridan, who at this instant is playing Cato, and has already played Richard twice. He had more company the second than the first night, and will make, I believe, a good figure on the whole, though his faults seem to be very many; some of natural deficience, and some of laborious affectation. He has, I think, no power of assuming either that dignity or elegance which some men, who have little of either in common life, can exhibit on the stage. His voice when strained is unpleasing, and when low is not always heard. He seems to think too much on the audience, and turns his face too often to the galleries.

- "However, I wish him well, and among other reasons, because I like his wife.
 - "Make haste to write to, dear sir,
 - "Your most affectionate servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

Notwithstanding our Author's constant self-reproaches on the score of idleness—as in the letter just quoted—"I have only stayed at home, and intended to do great things, which I have not done"—one feels that Johnson really did more than most of us, though we work fiercely from morning to night, and go over the ground at the rate of sixty miles an hour. Our haste to live and act is generating more heat than happiness, and more passion than steady progress.

"Non omnia grandior ætas quæ fugiamus habet."

98

LETTERS.

CHAPTER XI.

LETTERS-JOHNSON A PENSIONER-BOSWELL INTRODUCED.

(1760-1763.)

BEFORE the end of this chapter we shall have been able to set before the reader some rare morsels of Johnson's conversation; but, in the meantime, one or two very interesting letters claim to be read, and a well-merited honour conferred upon our Author falls to be recorded. The year 1761 seems to have been one of the "idle" sort; for on Easter-eve we find the Doctor lamenting that his life "since last Easter" had been "dissipated and useless." But we know now how all such confessions from the lips of the good man are to be interpreted.

The following letter is a model of dignity, politeness, delicacy, and sound sense. It was written to a lady who had solicited Johnson to use his influence with the Archbishop of Canterbury for the admission of her son to the University.

" June 8, 1762.

"MADAM,

"I hope you will believe that my delay in answering your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords; but like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain; and expectations improperly indulged, must end in disappointment. If it be asked what is the improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge, experience will quickly answer, that it is such expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire; expectation raised, not by the common occurrences of life, but by the wants of the expectant;

an expectation that requires the common course of things to be changed, and the general rules of action to be broken.

"When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking. You asked me to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true. There is no reason why, amongst all the great, I should choose to supplicate the archbishop; nor why, among all the possible objects of his bounty, the archbishop should choose your son. I know, Madam, how unwillingly conviction is admitted, when interest opposes it; but surely, Madam, you must allow, that there is no reason why that should be done by me, which every other man may do with equal reason, and which, indeed, no man can do properly, without some very particular relation both to the archbishop and to you. If I could help you in this exigence by any proper means, it would give me pleasure; but this proposal is so very remote from usual methods, that I cannot comply with it, but at the risk of such answer and suspicions as I believe you do not wish me to undergo.

"I have seen your son this morning; he seems a pretty youth, and will, perhaps, find some better friend than I can procure him; but though he should at last miss the University, he may still be wise, useful, and happy.

"I am, Madam, your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

That is the letter of a perfect gentleman.

"TO MR. JOSEPH BARETTI, AT MILAN.

" London, July 20, 1762.

"Sir.

"However justly you may accuse me for want of punctuality in correspondence, I am not so far lost in negligence as to omit the opportunity of writing to you, which Mr. Beauclerk's passage through Milan affords me.

"I suppose you received the 'Idlers,' and I intend that you shall soon receive Shakespeare, that you may explain his works to the

ladies of Italy, and tell them the story of the editor, among the other strange narratives with which your long residence in this unknown region has supplied you.

"As you have now been long away, I suppose your curiosity may pant for some news of your old friends. Miss Williams and I live much as we did. Miss Cotterel still continues to cling to Mrs. Porter, and Charlotte is now big of the fourth child. Mr. Reynolds gets six thousands a year. Mr. Chambers is gone this day, for the first time, the circuit with the judges. Mr. Richardson is dead of an apoplexy, and his second daughter has married a merchant.

"My vanity, or my kindness, makes me flatter myself, that you would rather hear of me than of those whom I have mentioned; but of myself I have very little which I care to tell. Last winter I went down to my native town, where I found the streets much narrower and shorter than I thought I had left them, inhabited by a new race of people, to whom I was very little known. playfellows were grown old, and forced me to suspect that I was no longer young. My only remaining friend has changed his principles, and was become the tool of the predominant faction. My daughter-in-law, from whom I expected most, and whom I met with sincere benevolence, has lost the beauty and gaiety of youth, without having gained much of the wisdom of age. wandered about for five days, and took the first convenient opportunity of returning to a place, where, if there is not much happiness, there is, at least, such a diversity of good and evil, that slight vexations do not fix upon the heart.

"I think in a few weeks to try another excursion; though to what end? Let me know, my Baretti, what has been the result of your return to your own country: whether time has made any alteration for the better, and whether, when the first raptures of salutation were over, you did not find your thoughts confessed their disappointment.

"Moral sentences appear ostentatious and tumid, when they have no greater occasions than the journey of a wit to his own town: yet such pleasures and such pains make up the general mass of life; and as nothing is little to him that feels it with great

sensibility, a mind able to see common incidents in their real state, is disposed by very common incidents to very serious contemplations. Let us trust that a time will come, when the present moment shall be no longer irksome: when we shall not borrow all our happiness from hope, which at last is to end in disappointment.

"I beg that you will show Mr. Beauclerk all the civilities which you have in your power; for he has always been kind to me.

"I have lately seen Mr. Stratico, Professor of Padua, who has told me of your quarrel with an Abbot of the Celestine order; but had not the particulars very ready in his memory.

"May you, my Baretti, be very happy at Milan, or some other place nearer to, Sir,

"Your most affectionate humble servant,
"Sam. Johnson."

Early in the year 1762, it had been represented to the new monarch, George III., that Johnson's services in the cause of literature were worthy of national recognition. Mr. Wedderburne had first introduced the subject to the Prime Minister, Lord Bute, and the Minister had laid the matter before his Majesty, who was graciously pleased to bestow a pension of 300% a-year upon the distinguished author. Johnson had some hesitancy in accepting this bounty, remembering how he had defined the words Pension and Pensioner in his Dictionary; but, by the help of his friends' remonstrances, his scruples were overruled and the royal goodness gratefully acknowledged. His Jacobite notions were well known, and his determined Toryism had never been a secret; it was therefore much to the credit of the Government that they generously overlooked all these things, and granted to the enthusiastic literary man what they would certainly have refused to the violent politician. "Pray, my lord," Johnson had said to the Minister, "what am I expected to do for this pension?" "It is not given you," was the reply, "for anything you are to do, but for what you have done." This was as delicate as it was honourable. Two of Johnson's friends, Mr. Murphy and Mr. Sheridan, now began to contend for the distinguished honour of being acknowledged the first to suggest the pension to Mr. Wedderburne. When the amusing contest was spoken of to that gentleman, he said, "All his friends assisted." But when it was further stated that Mr. Sheridan insisted upon being allowed the foremost place, Wedderburne replied, "He rang the bell." In any case, Sheridan seems to have been the herald of the good news to the Doctor himself, who exclaimed, with fervour: "The English language does not afford me terms adequate to my feelings on this occasion. I must have recourse to the French. I am pénétré with his Majesty's goodness." "I hope," cried Beauclerk, "you'll now purge and live cleanly like a gentleman."

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF BUTE.

" July 20, 1762.

"MY LORD,

"When the bills were yesterday delivered to me by Mr. Wedderburne, I was informed by him of the future favours which his Majesty has, by your Lordship's recommendation, been induced to intend for me.

"Bounty always receives part of its value from the manner in which it is bestowed: your Lordship's kindness includes every circumstance that can gratify delicacy, or enforce obligation. You have conferred favours on a man who has neither alliance nor interest, who has not merited them by services, nor courted them by officiousness; you have spared him the shame of solicitation, and the anxiety of suspense.

"What has been thus elegantly given, will, I hope, be not reproachfully enjoyed; I shall endeavour to give your Lordship the only recompense which generosity desires, the gratification of finding that your benefits are not improperly bestowed. I am, my Lord,

"Your Lordship's most obliged,

"Most obedient, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Johnson's acceptance of this pension was harshly and scornfully commented upon by his enemies at the time, and has occasionally been sneered at since. Envy and hatred have capital eyes for detecting inconsistency anywhere and everywhere except in themselves; but they are usually the eyes of a diseased imagination, and not those of a healthy reason. They have proved so in this case.

This year Johnson accompanied Sir Joshua Reynolds on a visit of some weeks to Devonshire, and enjoyed the trip immensely. The noblemen and gentry of the district did all possible honour to the great Dictionary Johnson, as he was often called, and Dictionary Johnson repaid them richly by talking his very best. At one of these seats, the master of the house, thinking it proper to introduce something scientific into the conversation when such a guest was present, addressed our Author thus: "Are you a botanist, Mr. Johnson?"—"No, sir," answered Johnson, "I am not a botanist; and" [alluding to his near-sightedness] "should I wish to become a botanist, I must first turn myself into a reptile." What a retort! One never needs to be told in what tone of voice Johnson's best deliverances were made; every word is dramatic and speaks for itself.

The Doctor afterwards said of this visit that "he had derived from it a great accession of new ideas." Ideas come easily when the mind is at ease and the heart sound. Johnson was feasted wherever he went, but half the worth of the feast he took with himself to the table, in the form of a rich store of good spirits. "Joy is the best of wine."

"This year (1763) is to me a memorable year," Boswell remarks; and, we may add, to the world; for in that year Johnson was introduced to his future biographer. The meeting took place at the house of Mr. Thomas Davies, the actor, who kept a bookseller's shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden. We shall allow Boswell to describe the encounter with all minuteness and in his own way:—

"On Monday, the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs.

BOSWELL INTRODUCED.

104

Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop; and Mr. Davies having perceived him, through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us,—he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, 'Look, my Lord, it comes!' I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his Dictionary, in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation; which was the first picture his friend did for him, which Sir Joshua very kindly presented to me. Mr. Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, 'Don't tell where I come from.'-- 'From Scotland,' cried Davies, roguishly. Johnson,' said I, 'I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it.' I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as light pleasantry to soothe and conciliate him, and not as a humiliating abasement at the expense of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for with that quickness of wit for which he was so remarkable, he seized the expression, 'come from Scotland,' which I used in the sense of being of that country; and, as if I had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, 'That, Sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help.' This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we had sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might come next. He then addressed himself to Davies: 'What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings.' Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, I ventured to say, 'O Sir, I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to 'Sir,' said he, with a stern look, 'I have known David Garrick longer than you have done; and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject.' Perhaps I deserved this check; for it was rather presumptuous in me, an entire stranger, to express any doubt of the justice of his animadversion upon his old acquaintance and pupil. I now felt myself much mortified, and began to think that the hope which I had long indulged of obtaining his acquaintance was blasted. And, in truth, had not my ardour been uncommonly strong, and my resolution uncommonly persevering, so rough a reception might have deterred me for ever from making any further attempts. Fortunately, however, I remained upon the field not wholly discomfited; and was soon rewarded by hearing some of his conversation, of which I preserved the following short minute, without marking the questions and observations by which it was produced.

- "'People,' he remarked, 'may be taken in once, who imagine that an author is greater in private life than other men. Uncommon parts require uncommon opportunities for their exertion.'
- "'The notion of liberty amuses the people of England, and helps to keep off the tædium vitæ. When a butcher tells you that his heart bleeds for his country, he has, in fact, no uneasy feeling.'
- "'Sheridan will not succeed at Bath with his oratory. Ridicule has gone down before him, and, I doubt, Derrick is his enemy.'
- "'Derrick may do very well, as long as he can outrun his character; but the moment his character gets up with him, it is all over.'
- "Some years afterwards, when I reminded him of this sarcasm, he said, 'Well, but Derrick has now got a character that he need not run away from.'
- "I was highly pleased with the extraordinary vigour of his conversation, and regretted that I was drawn away from it by an engagement at another place. I had, for a part of the evening, been left alone with him, and had ventured to make an observation now and then, which he received very civilly; so that I was satisfied that, though there was a roughness in his manner, there was no ill-nature in his disposition. Davies followed me to the door, and when I complained to him a little of the hard blows which the great man had given me, he kindly took upon him to

console me by saying, 'Don't be uneasy. I can see he likes you very well.'"

A week afterwards Boswell ventured to call upon the Doctor at his own house, No. 1, Inner Temple-lane, and there he "found the Giant in his den." "He received me very courteously," says Boswell; "but, it must be confessed, that his apartment, and furniture, and morning dress, were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty; he had on a little old shrivelled unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment he began to talk. gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him; and when they went away, I also rose; but he said to me, 'Nay, don't go.'-- 'Sir,' said I, 'I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you.' He seemed pleased with the compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, 'Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me.' I have preserved the following short minute of what passed this day:—

"'Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the street, or in any other unusual place. Now, although, rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not pray, that their understanding is not called in question.'

"Concerning this unfortunate poet, Christopher Smart, who was confined in a madhouse, he had, at another time, the following conversation with Dr. Burney.—Burney: 'How does poor Smart do, Sir: is he likely to recover?'—Johnson: 'It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease: for he grows fat upon it.'—Burney:—'Perhaps, Sir, that may be from want of exercise.'—Johnson: 'No, Sir; he has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement, he used for exercise to walk to the alehouse;

but he was carried back again. I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as any one else. Another charge was, that he did not love clean linen: and I have no passion for it.'

"Johnson continued: 'Mankind have a great aversion to intellectual labour; but even supposing knowledge to be easily attainable, more people would be content to be ignorant than would take even a little trouble to acquire it.'

"'The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act. If I fling half-a-crown to a beggar, with intention to break his head, and he picks it up and buys victuals with it, the physical effect is good; but, with respect to me, the action is very wrong. So religious exercises, if not performed with an intention to please God, avail us nothing. As our Saviour says of those who perform them from other motives, "Verily they have their reward."

"When I rose a second time he again pressed me to stay, which I did.

"He told me, that he generally went abroad at four in the afternoon, and seldom came home till two in the morning. I took the liberty to ask if he did not think it wrong to live thus, and not make more use of his great talents. He owned it was a bad habit. On reviewing, at the distance of many years, my journal of this period, I wonder how, at my first visit, I ventured to talk to him so freely, and that he bore it with so much indulgence.

"Before we parted, he was so good as to promise to favour me with his company one evening at my lodgings; and as I took my leave, shook me cordially by the hand. It is almost needless to add, that I felt no little elation at having now so happily established an acquaintance of which I had been so long ambitious."

One may wish that Boswell had been a little more dignified in his approaches to the great man; that he had worshipped standing erect in the full consciousness of being himself a man: that he had not prostrated himself in the dust, Eastern-wise, as an expression of his admiration and reverence; that he had never written a sentence like that, even though he felt its truth,—" It is benevolent to

BOSWELL.

108

allow me to sit and hear you." All these are legitimate wishes; but perhaps it is not legitimate to say, as some have said, that it would have been better and healthier for the world to have wanted all that Boswell has recorded of his hero, than to see through the whole of it the picture of Boswell himself. Still, there should now be no mincing of the fact, that the life of a great man may be well written—best written—by one who stands face to face with him, and does not lie at his feet. There were few companies then in which Samuel Johnson's natural kingship was not readily recognised, and there are not many now in which it would be denied; but it is surely possible to pay all due allegiance to a king without ignoring this other great truth:—

"A man's a man for a' that."

CHAPTER XII.

CONVERSATIONS-AT TEA WITH MRS. WILLIAMS.

(1763.)

Now that Boswell is here to take copious notes of everything that falls from the Doctor's lips, we shall not want for examples of Johnson's conversational powers from this time forward. Without attempting to criticise in any elaborate way our Author's talk, we would simply beg the reader to mark its point, its pith, its precision, its practicality. Whatever his subject may be, and from whatever point of view he may look at it, this man always sees something sharp, clear, and distinctly defined. In his conversations there stands out always an able and honest man, who knows what he says, and says only what he knows. If, also, he is a little too conscious of his greatness in this respect, and occasionally bullies his opponents, can we not pardon him? That is surely not the best talk which is most plentifully larded with apologetic clauses: "by your leave," "with your permission," "if one may say so without offence." Johnson's talk is entirely free from anything of this kind. It may be worth mentioning, also, that Johnson himself would sometimes distinguish between conversation and talk. He was once asked if there had been good conversation at a certain house where he had been dining. John-SON: "No, Sir; we had talk enough, but no conversation; there was nothing discussed."

On Saturday, June 25th, when Boswell was dining at an eating-house in Butcher-row, Johnson happened to drop in and take a seat at another table. Our Author probably said little until his appetite was satisfied, but he then got into a violent dispute with an Irish gentleman about the cause of the black colour of Negroes. "Why, Sir," said Johnson, "it has been accounted for in three

ways: either by supposing that they are the posterity of Ham, who was cursed, or that God had created two kinds of men, one black and another white, or that, by the heat of the sun, the skin is scorched, and so acquires a sooty hue. This matter has been much canvassed among naturalists, but has never been brought to any certain issue." The rest of the debate has not been preserved; but the Irishman got very much heated in the course of it. and used language stronger than seemed to suit the taste of our Author, who at length rose and walked quietly away. In great wrath the Irishman shot after him this withering arrow, "He has a most ungainly figure, and an affectation of pomposity unworthy of a man of genius." Boswell followed the retiring disputant, who had not observed him when he entered the room: and it was agreed that they should meet in the evening at the Mitre Tavern, one of Johnson's favourite haunts. They came together, therefore, according to appointment; had a good supper, a good talk, and some good port wine to give the whole a flavour.

Speaking of the poet Gray, the Doctor said: "Sir, I do not think Gray a first-rate poet. He has not a bold imagination, nor much command of words. The obscurity in which he has involved himself will not persuade us that he is sublime. His 'Elegy in a Churchyard' has a happy selection of images, but I don't like what are called his great things. His Ode which begins,

'Ruin seize thee, ruthless King, Confusion on thy banners wait!

has been celebrated for its abruptness, and plunging into the subject all at once. But such arts as these have no merit, unless when they are original. We admire them only once; and this abruptness has nothing new in it. We have had it often before. Nay, we have had it in the old song of Johnny Armstrong:

^{&#}x27;Is there ever a man in all Scotland, From the highest estate to the lowest degree,' &c.

And then, Sir,

'Yes, there is a man in Westmoreland, And Johnny Armstrong they do him call.'

There, now, you plunge at once into the subject. You have no previous narration to lead you to it.—The two next lines in that Ode are, I think, very good:—

'Though fann'd by conquest's crimson wing, They mock the air with idle state.'"

They talked of belief in ghosts.

Johnson: "Sir, I make a distinction between what a man may experience by the mere strength of his imagination, and what imagination cannot possibly produce. Thus, suppose I should think that I saw a form, and heard a voice cry, 'Johnson, you are a very wicked fellow, and unless you repent you will certainly be punished;' my own unworthiness is so deeply impressed upon my mind, that I might *imagine* I thus saw and heard, and therefore I should not believe that an external communication had been made to me. But if a form should appear, and a voice should tell me that a particular man had died, at a particular place, and a particular hour, a fact which I had no apprehension of, nor any means of knowing, and this fact, with all its circumstances, should afterwards be unquestionably proved, I should in that case be persuaded that I had supernatural intelligence imparted to me."

Miracle or no miracle! Natural or supernatural! Thus, in our own day, we still keep talking, after a hundred years more experience than Johnson had of the barrenness of the discussion. But we have somehow got on to the treadmill, and must tramp, though with weary feet and the uneasy consciousness all the while that we are making no way. We must still keep fighting the same old problems, with the same old weapons, and with the same miserable issue.

Friday, July 1st: The Mitre Tavern: Goldsmith present.

As yet, Goldsmith was known only as the author of "An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe," "The Citizen of the World," and "The Bee;" but these had already given no obscure indications of his genius. The "Citizen of the World" in particular had placed its author in the foremost rank of British Essayists. His "Vicar of Wakefield" had been sold by this time, but was not published for a long while after. The sale of it was one of Johnson's best good deeds, and we shall let him tell its story in his own words:-"I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

Dr. John Campbell, the celebrated political and biographical writer, being mentioned in the course of the evening, Johnson said: "Campbell is a man of much knowledge, and has a good share of imagination. His 'Hermippus Redivivus' is very entertaining, as an account of the Hermetic philosophy, and as furnishing a curious history of the extravagances of the human mind. If it were merely imaginary it would be nothing at all. Campbell is not always rigidly careful of truth in his conversation; but I do not believe there is anything of carelessness in his books. Campbell is a good

man, a pious man. I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a church for many years; but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat. This shows that he has good principles. I used to go pretty often to Campbell's on a Sunday evening, till I began to consider that the shoals of Scotchmen who flocked about him might probably say, when anything of mine was well done, 'Ay, ay, he has learnt this of Cawmell!"

Of Churchill's poetry:-

JOHNSON: "It has a temporary currency only from its audacity of abuse, and being filled with living names, and it will sink into oblivion."

Boswell: "You are hardly a fair judge, Sir; for Churchill has attacked you violently."

Johnson: "Nay, Sir, I am a very fair judge. He did not attack me violently till he found I did not like his poetry; and his attack on me shall not prevent me from continuing to say what I think of him, from an apprehension that it may be ascribed to resentment. No, Sir; I called the fellow a blockhead at first, and I will call him a blockhead still. However, I will acknowledge that I have a better opinion of him now than I once had; for he has shown more fertility than I expected. To be sure, he is a tree that cannot produce good fruit: he only bears crabs. But, Sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few."

When the meeting broke up, Goldsmith accompanied our Author to the lodgings of Mrs. Williams, in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, where Johnson made it a point to drink tea every night before he went home, however late the hour might be. "His heart the lowliest duties on itself did lay;" and this was a loving little duty which went sweetly home to another lonely heart. It is a beautiful and touching picture this, of the poor old creature sitting there night after night, waiting patiently for the expected presence, and keeping her days bright with the thought of the snug little tea-party which the evening was to bring. It is a dear domestic drama acted every evening, yet never wearying the players. Then, too, how fine the contrast between Johnson the

hero of the Mitre Tavern, and the undisputed victor in all the wit-combats fought there, and Johnson the kindly light of a blind old woman's darkened home. Well might Boswell envy Goldsmith the privilege of forming one that night at the happy table. But he had hardly yet passed his novitiate, and could not therefore reasonably expect to be so soon made free of all the mysteries of Johnson's glorious friendship.

Wednesday, July 6th: Mitre Tavern.

Goldsmith argued against the well-known maxim of the British Constitution, "the king can do no wrong."

GOLDSMITH: "What is morally false cannot be politically true; and as the king may, in the exercise of his regal power, command and cause the doing of what is wrong, it certainly may be said, in sense and in reason, that he can do wrong."

JOHNSON: "Sir, you are to consider that in our constitution, according to its true principles, the king is the head, he is supreme; he is above everything, and there is no power by which he can be tried. Therefore it is, Sir, that we hold the king can do no wrong; that whatever may happen to be wrong in government may not be above our reach by being ascribed to majesty. dress is always to be had against oppression by punishing the im-The king, though he should command, cannot mediate agents. force a judge to condemn a man unjustly; therefore it is the judge whom we prosecute and punish. Political institutions are formed upon the consideration of what will most frequently tend to the good of the whole, although now and then exceptions may occur. Thus it is better in general that a nation should have a supreme legislative power, although it may at times be abused. And then, Sir, there is this consideration, that if the abuse be enormous, nature will rise up, and, claiming her original rights, overturn a corrupt political system."

The Rev. Mr. Ogilvie, a Scotchman, began to sound the praises of his native country, observing that there was very rich land around Edinburgh. Goldsmith denied that; whereupon the Rev. gentleman gave up the ground, and took refuge in the undeniable wild glories of the "land of the mountain and the flood."

JOHNSON: "I believe, Sir, you have a great many. Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, Sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high-road that leads him to England!"

That is the best joke the Doctor has yet passed in our hearing: it set the table in a roar.

Thursday, July 14th: Mitre Tavern: JOHNSON and BOSWELL alone.

Although the evening turned out a brilliant one intellectually, from the point of view of the weather Boswell thought it rather a failure. The night being damp and rainy, he, in the innocence of his heart, took the liberty of remarking that such weather was bad for some people's nerves and spirits—adding, however, that it was good for the vegetable creation, which may be presumed to be free from the curse of "nerves and spirits."

JOHNSON: "Why, yes, Sir; it is good for vegetables, and for the animals who eat those vegetables, and for the animals who eat those animals."

The Doctor never allowed gaps in the conversation to be filled up with weather-talk: he used invariably to say, "Let us not talk of the weather."

Johnson enlarged upon the superiority of rhyme over blank

Boswell observed that Dr. Adam Smith, in his professorial lectures upon composition, took the same side, and very warmly.

JOHNSON: "Sir, I was once in company with Smith, and we did not take to each other; but had I known that he loved rhyme as much as you tell me he does, I should have HUGGED him."

Talking of those who denied the truth of Christianity, he said: "It is always easy to be on the negative side. If a man were now to deny that there is salt upon the table, you could not reduce him to an absurdity. Come, let us try this a little farther.

CONVERSATIONS.

116

I deny that Canada is taken, and I can support my denial by pretty good arguments. The French are a much more numerous people than we; and it is not likely that they would allow us to take it. 'But the ministry have assured us, in all the formality of the Gazette, that it is taken.'-Very true. But the ministry have put us to an enormous expense by the war in America, and it is their interest to persuade us that we have got something for our money. 'But the fact is confirmed by thousands of men who were at the taking of it.'—Ay, but these men have still more interest in deceiving us. They don't want that you should think the French have beat them, but that they have beat the French. Now, suppose you should go over and find that it really is taken, that would only satisfy yourself: for when you come home we will not believe you. We will say, you have been bribed. - Yet, Sir, notwithstanding all these plausible objections, we have no doubt that Canada is really ours. Such is the weight of common testimony. How much stronger are the evidences of the Christian religion?"

JOHNSON: "Idleness is a disease which must be combated; but I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good. A young man should read five hours in a day, and so may acquire a great deal of knowledge."

Boswell was now getting very bold, and even dared to banter his hero upon the abuse he had received in the matter of the Government pension.

JOHNSON (with a hearty laugh): "Why, Sir, it is a mighty foolish noise that they make. I have accepted of a pension as a reward which has been thought due to my literary merit; and now that I have this pension, I am the same man in every respect that I have ever been; I retain the same principles. It is true that I cannot now curse (smiling) the house of Hanover; nor would it be decent for me to drink King James's health in the wine that King George gives me money to pay for. But, Sir, I think that the pleasure of cursing the house of Hanover, and drinking King

James's health, are amply overbalanced by three hundred pounds a year."

In earlier days Johnson's Jacobitism had been a real feeling, but at this time it had long ceased to be anything more than a kind of poetic sentiment. One day, in those earlier times, when dining at old Mr. Langton's, with Miss Roberts, a niece of his host, as one of the company, the Doctor, with his usual gallantry and politeness where the fair sex was concerned, took the young lady by the hand, and said, "My dear, I hope you are a Jacobite." Mr. Langton looked hurt, and demanded an explanation.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I meant no offence to your niece; I meant her a great compliment. A Jacobite, Sir, believes in the divine right of kings. He that believes in the divine right of kings believes in a Divinity. A Jacobite believes in the divine right of bishops. He that believes in the divine right of bishops, believes in the divine authority of the Christian religion. Therefore, Sir, a Jacobite is neither an Atheist nor a Deist. That cannot be said of a Whig; for Whiggism is a negation of all principle."

Even then, it is clear, his Jacobite Toryism had been more talk than conviction. Years later, he was heard to say "that, after the death of a violent Whig, with whom he used to contend with great eagerness, he felt his Toryism much abated."

Boswell described to him a wild fellow from Scotland, who aped savagery, and spurned at all good old "use and wont."

JOHNSON: "There is nothing surprising in this, Sir. He wants to make himself conspicuous. He would tumble in a hog's-sty, as long as you looked at him and called to him to come out. But let him alone, never mind him, and he'll soon give it over."

Boswell: "The same person maintains that there is no distinction between virtue and vice."

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, if the fellow does not think as he speaks, he is lying; and I see not what honour he can propose to himself from having the character of a liar. But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, Sir, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons."

CONVERSATIONS.

118

One can hardly help fancying that this ferocious Scotchman must have been entirely a creature of Boswell's own imagination, "got between sleep and wake," and brought forward to draw the Doctor out, and humour one of his supposed prejudices.

Johnson recommended his friend to keep a diary, and begged him to think nothing too small to find a place there. "There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible." There is much food for thought in a little morsel like that. Mark its tenderness too.

Boswell was in ecstasies next morning when, waking, he found the conversation of the preceding evening still fresh in his memory. The talk, however, seems to have agreed with him better than the port-wine, for his "nerves" were always found to suffer from the unusual strain. But a word in season from a friend. to whom he retailed the last night's feast and bewailed the morning's headache, almost set him to rights. "One had better be palsied at eighteen than not keep company with such a man." Had the poor sufferer laid his complaint before the man who had directly or indirectly caused all the pain, he would have met with a retort similar to that which another gentleman had had to bear, who, having complained of headache while travelling with Johnson in a post-chaise, had been thus consoled: "At your age, Sir, I had no headache." Each man is the centre of his own universe, and we are often very unwilling, sometimes quite unable, to take long walks for sympathetic purposes to the dwellers about the circumference.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONVERSATIONS—"ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE."
(1763.)

Tuesday, July 19th: Johnson's House.

BEFORE sitting down to a very short talk, let us pay a visit to Johnson's library, under the guidance of Mr. Levett. It is contained in two garrets which had formerly been a bookseller's warehouse. The books are all covered with dust, and tumbling about in great confusion. The floor is littered with manuscript leaves, which our friend Boswell beholds with reverence—fancying they may be young unfledged Ramblers, or the faint beginnings of the great "Rasselas." Johnson whispers to us that he keeps his studious visits to this sacred spot secret and mysterious-not making even his servant aware of his whereabouts: for he desires strict retirement, and will not ask his servant to say "not at home" when he knows that his master is all the while snugly ensconced in this quiet corner. "A servant's strict regard for truth," says he, "must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know that it is merely a form of denial: but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to tell a lie for me, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for himself."

Descending to the lower regions, we say to ourselves that our visit to the garrets would have been well worth while had we seen nothing at all, and only heard this one manly deliverance. Yet Johnson sometimes chose to defend lying—one kind of it at least; as when, on another occasion, he said: "There are inexcusable lies and consecrated lies. For instance, we are told that on the arrival of the news of the unfortunate battle of Fontenoy, every

CONVERSATIONS.

heart beat, and every eye was in tears. Now we know that no man ate his dinner the worse, but there should have been all this concern; and to say there was (smiling) may be reckoned a consecrated lie."

SIR THOMAS ROBINSON: "The King of Prussia values himself upon three things; upon being a hero, a musician, and an author."

JOHNSON: "Pretty well, Sir, for one man. As to his being an author, I have not looked at his poetry; but his prose is poor stuff. He writes just as you may suppose Voltaire's footboy to do, who has been his amanuensis. He has such parts as the valet might have, and about as much of the colouring of the style as might be got by transcribing his works."

This was afterwards repeated to Voltaire himself, who used to call Johnson "a superstitious dog," but who now, on the strength of this mutual feeling on the subject of the great king, exclaimed, "An honest fellow!"

Wednesday, July 20th: Boswell's Lodgings.

JOHNSON: "Pity is not natural to man. Children are always cruel. Savages are always cruel. Pity is acquired and improved by the cultivation of reason. We may have uneasy sensations from seeing a creature in distress, without pity: for we have not pity unless we wish to relieve them. When I am on my way to dine with a friend, and, finding it late, have bid the coachman make haste, if I happen to attend when he whips his horses, I may feel unpleasantly that the animals are put to pain, but I do not wish him to desist. No, Sir, I wish him to drive on."

Speaking of Hume's style :-

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, his style is not English; the structure of his sentences is French. Now the French structure and the English structure may, in the nature of things, be equally good. But if you allow that the English language is established, he is wrong. My name might originally have been Nicholson, as well as Johnson; but were you to call me Nicholson now, you would call me very absurdly."

120

Mr. DEMPSTER [Rousseau and his doctrines running in his head]: "The advantages of fortune and rank are nothing to a wise man, who ought to value only merit."

JOHNSON: "If man were a savage, living in the woods by himself, this might be true; but in civilised society we all depend upon each other, and our happiness is very much owing to the good opinion of mankind. Now, Sir, in civilised society, external advantages make us more respected. A man with a good coat upon his back meets with a better reception than he who has a Sir, you may analyse this and say what is there in it? But that will avail you nothing, for it is part of a general system. Pound St. Paul's church into atoms, and consider any single atom; it is, to be sure, good for nothing; but put all these atoms together and you have St. Paul's church. So it is with human felicity, which is made up of many ingredients, each of which may be shown to be very insignificant. In civilised society personal merit will not serve you so much as money will. Sir, you may make the experiment. Go into the street and give one man a lecture on morality and another a shilling, and see which will respect you most. If you wish only to support nature, Sir William Petty fixes your allowance at three pounds a year; but as times are much altered, let us call it six pounds. will fill your belly, shelter you from the weather, and even get you a strong lasting coat, supposing it to be made of good bull's hide. Now, Sir, all beyond this is artificial, and is desired in order to obtain a greater degree of respect from our fellow-creatures. And, Sir, if six hundred pounds a year procure a man more consequence, and, of course, more happiness than six pounds a year, the same proportion will hold as to six thousand, and so on, as far as opulence can be carried. Perhaps he who has a large fortune may not be so happy as he who has a small one; but that must proceed from other causes than from his having the large fortune: for, cateris paribus, he who is rich in a civilised society must be happier than he who is poor; as riches, if properly used, (and it is a man's own fault if they are not,) must be productive of the highest advantages. Money, to be sure, of itself is of no use: for its only use is to part with it. Rousseau, and all those who deal

in paradoxes, are led away by a childish desire of novelty. When I was a boy I used always to choose the wrong side of a debate, because most ingenious things, that is to say, most new things, could be said upon it. Sir, there is nothing for which you may not muster up more plausible arguments than those which are urged against wealth and other external advantages. there is stealing: why should it be thought a crime? When we consider by what unjust methods property has been often acquired, and that what was unjustly got it must be unjust to keep, where is the harm in one man's taking the property of another from him? Besides, Sir, when we consider the bad use that many people make of their property, and how much better use the thief may make of it, it may be defended as a very allowable practice. Yet, Sir, the experience of mankind has discovered stealing to be so very bad a thing that they make no scruple to hang a man for it. When I was running about this town a very poor fellow, I was a great arguer for the advantages of poverty; but I was, at the same time, very sorry to be poor. Sir, all the arguments which are brought to represent poverty as no evil, show it to be evidently a great evil. You never find people labouring to convince you that you may live very happily upon a plentiful fortune.—So you hear people talking how miserable a king must be; and yet they all wish to be in his place."

Thursday Morning, July 21st: JOHNSON'S Rooms.

JOHNSON [speaking of a gentleman who happened to be referred to]: "I have not met with any man for a long time who has given me such general displeasure. He is totally unfixed in his principles, and wants to puzzle other people."

Boswell: "His principles have been poisoned by a noted infidel writer [Hume], but he is, nevertheless, a benevolent good man."

JOHNSON: "We can have no dependence upon that instinctive, that constitutional goodness, which is not founded upon principle. I grant you that such a man may be a very amiable member of society. I can conceive him placed in such a situation that he is not much tempted to deviate from what is right; and as every

man prefers virtue, when there is not some strong incitement to transgress its precepts, I can conceive him doing nothing wrong. But if such a man stood in need of money, I should not like to trust him; and I should certainly not trust him with young ladies, for there, there is always temptation. Hume, and other sceptical innovators, are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any ex-Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity: so they have betaken themselves to error. Truth, Sir, is a cow which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull. If I could have allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired! Everything which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote. Always remember this, that after a system is well settled upon positive evidence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited, that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject; so that there may be objections raised against any thing. There are objections against a plenum, and objections against a vacuum; yet one of them must certainly be true."

Thursday Evening, July 21st: Private Room at the Turk's Head Coffee-house, in the Strand.

JOHNSON: "Sir, I love the acquaintance of young people; because, in the first place, I don't like to think myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longest, if they do last; and then, Sir, young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect. I love the young dogs of this age; they have more wit and humour and knowledge of life than we had; but then the dogs are not so good scholars. Sir, in my early days I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now. My judgment, to be sure, was not so good, but I I remember very well, when I was at Oxford, had all the facts. an old gentleman said to me, 'Young man, ply your book diligently now and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task."

Johnson felt this need of steady renewal of life more and more keenly as every year brought him nearer that solemn moment when we must all tempt the dark Hereafter alone. He once said to Sir Joshua Reynolds: "If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life he will soon find himself left alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship in constant repair."

JOHNSON [speaking of a favourite subject of his-subordination]: "Sir, I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect than his money. I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them I would behave to a nobleman as I should exdo to me. pect he would behave to me, were I a nobleman, and he Sam. Johnson. Sir, there is one Mrs. Macaulay, in this town, a great republican. One day when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, 'Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind-are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, Madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman; I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us.' I thus, Sir, showed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked Sir, your levellers wish to level down as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling up to themselves. They would all have some people under them; why not then have some people above them?"

Boswell mentioned a certain author who was very forward, showing no deference to noblemen into whose company he was admitted.

JOHNSON: "Suppose a shoemaker should claim an equality with him, as he does with a lord: how he would stare. 'Why, Sir, do you stare?' says the shoemaker; 'I do great service to society. 'Tis true I am paid for doing it; but so are you, Sir; and I am sorry to say it, better paid than I am, for doing something not so necessary. For mankind could do better without your books than without my shoes.' Thus, Sir, there would be a

perpetual struggle for precedence, were there no fixed invariable rules for the distinction of rank, which creates no jealousy, as it is allowed to be accidental."

Boswell mentioned a gentleman who had said that he had a great respect for Johnson, but that it was mingled with fear.

JOHNSON: "If he were to be acquainted with me, it might lessen both."

Tuesday, July 26th: JOHNSON'S House.

Speaking of the education of children, Boswell asked Johnson what he thought it best to teach them first.

JOHNSON: "Sir, it is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the meantime your breech is bare. Sir, while you are considering which of two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learnt them both."

Thursday, fuly 28th: Turk's Head Coffee-house.

JOHNSON: "Swift has a higher reputation than he deserves. His excellence is strong sense; for his humour, though very well, is not remarkably good. I doubt whether the 'Tale of a Tub' be his; for he never owned it, and it is much above his usual manner."

JOHNSON: "Thomson, I think, had as much of the poet about him as most writers. Everything appeared to him through the medium of his favourite pursuit. He could not have viewed these two candles burning but with a poetical eye."

Boswell: "Has not ——— a great deal of wit, Sir?"

JOHNSON: "I do not think so, Sir. He is, indeed, continually attempting wit, but he fails. And I have no more pleasure in hearing a man attempting wit and failing, than in seeing a man trying to leap over a ditch and tumbling into it."

JOHNSON: "Sheridan cannot bear me. I bring his declamation to a point. I ask him a plain question, 'What do you mean

to teach?' Besides, Sir, what influence can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country, by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover, to show light at Calais."

Sheridan had been pensioned about a year before, and Johnson, hearing of it, had said, "What! have they given him a pension? Then it is time for me to give up mine." This pretty little speech had, of course, been carried to Sheridan, who never forgot the saying or forgave the man who made it.

As Johnson and Boswell were walking along the Strand that night, after leaving the Turk's Head, a woman of the town came up to them—making the usual overtures. "No, no, my girl," said Johnson; "it won't do." But that was all; no railing accusation, no harsh repulse, nothing but deep pity for the poor forlorn wretch and silent rejection of all her enticements. Was it that the moralist, looking with the eyes of a good man's heart and not those of a political economist's head, saw, in the miserable woman, not some shameless creature making market of her degradation, but rather

" One more unfortunate, Weary of breath?"

But here is a grand practical proof of his humanity towards one of those poor wretches; so well authenticated that it cannot be called in question. Coming home late one night he found a woman lying in the street, so much exhausted that she could not walk. He took her on his back, carried her to his own house, had her wants attended to during a long illness, and, on her recovery, endeavoured to put her into a virtuous way of living. We shall not ask what this man's religious creed was, in the light of an act like that.

Towards the poor and the miserable Johnson was always especially indulgent. "What signifies," asks some one, "giving halfpence to common beggars? They only lay it out in gin and tobacco." "And why," Johnson replies, "should they be denied such sweeteners of their existence? Life is a pill which none of

us can bear to swallow without gilding; yet for the poor we delight in stripping it still barer, and are not ashamed to show even visible displeasure if ever the bitter taste is taken from their mouths." And he practised his own precept; often giving all the money in his pocket to the poor, who were in the habit of watching him whenever he appeared in the streets. This was poor political economy, perhaps; but it may pass for pretty good humanity.

"He hath a hand
Open as day for melting charity."

TRIP TO GREENWICH.

128

CHAPTER XIV.

TRIP TO GREENWICH—THE DOCTOR AT SUPPER—PARTING WITH BOSWELL.

(1763).

On Saturday the two friends enjoyed a double pleasure: a sail on the Thames and the usual conversation by the way.

Boswell: "Do you think a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education?"

JOHNSON: "Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it."

Boswell: "And yet people go through the world very well and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning."

JOHNSON: "Why,Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors. What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?"

Boy: "I would give what I have." [The boy receives a double fare for his satisfactory answer.]

JOHNSON [turning to Boswell]: "Sir, a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge."

They landed at the Old Swan, walked to Billingsgate, took boat again, and sailed smoothly down the Thames. It was a glorious

day; the river was crowded with ships lying at anchor; and the country on every side looked splendid in the light of the midday sun. Nature, except when working through men, was never a great force in either of our excursionists; but she must this day have slid into their souls and done her gentle work in her own grand silent way.

Preaching was mentioned, and the great success of the Methodists (a name only about thirty years old at that time) was alluded to

JOHNSON: "Sir, it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner, which is the only way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregations; a practice for which they will be praised by men of sense. To insist against drunkenness as a crime, because it debases reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people: but to tell them that they may die in a fit of drunkenness and show them how dreadful that would be, cannot fail to make a deep impression. Sir, when your Scotch clergy give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country."

They now reached Greenwich, and Boswell there did his hero the honour of quoting with great enthusiasm four lines from "London" in its praise:—

> "On Thames's banks in silent thought we stood, Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood: Pleas'd with the seat which gave Eliza birth, We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth."

They did not kneel on this occasion; they contented themselves with a walk in Greenwich Park.

JOHNSON: "Is not this very fine?"

Boswell: "Yes, sir; but not equal to Fleet Street."

JOHNSON: "You are right, sir."

What would Wordsworth have said to such barefaced Philis tinism?

BOSWELL AND MRS. WILLIAMS.

130

"One impulse from a vernal wood May teach you more of man, Of moral evil and of good, Than all the sages can."

But we must learn to tolerate the most perfect opposites in the men whom we equally love and reverence.

Our friends returned to London late in the evening; Boswell shivering with cold, and getting, by way of cure and comfort, a sharp "Why do you shiver?" from the imperturbable Doctor, whom wind and weather never harmed.

This delightful holiday was closed in a truly characteristic fashion, at the Turk's Head. Men, manners, and books: these were Johnson's only true loves; to other fairs he could indeed pay a flying visit, but not even the Genius of Nature could keep him long away.

Next day, Sunday, Boswell told Johnson that he had been at a Quaker's meeting in the morning, and had heard a woman preach.

JOHNSON: "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

On Tuesday, August 2nd, Boswell had the desire of his heart at last, in being taken to Mrs. Williams's to drink tea. This night, tea, talk, and hostess were all sublime; but afterwards, when the novelty of the honour had a little worn off through frequent visits, he does not appear to have been quite so overjoyed. He used to fancy that Mrs. Williams put her fingers into the cups to discover if they were full; and he was squeamish enough to feel a sinking of the heart at the sight of such liberties taken with what was so soon to be a portion of himself. He was mistaken, however; the old lady only touched the outside of the cups, and by an extremely nice sense ascertained in that way if they were filled.

After tea he was shown his hero's favourite walk: a long narrow paved court in the neighbourhood, overshadowed by a few trees.

On Wednesday, August 3rd, they had their last evening at the Turk's Head, Boswell being to leave England for the continent on Friday. Boswell happened to speak of the prevailing custom of telling absurd stories about Johnson's sayings and doings.

JOHNSON: "What do they make me say, sir?"

Boswell (laughing heartily): "Why, sir, as an instance very strange indeed, David Hume told me you said that you would stand before a battery of cannon to restore the Convocation to its full powers."

JOHNSON (with thundering voice and eyes flashing fire): "And would I not, sir? Shall the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland have its General Assembly, and the Church of England be denied its Convocation?"

His High Church zeal had got the better of him for the moment; still, that was the speech of a true "defender of the faith"—such as he believed it to be.

Johnson had arranged to see his friend out of England. On Friday, therefore, they set out together early in the morning in the Harwich coach. In the course of the journey, one of their fellow-travellers, a fat elderly lady, said that she had done her best to educate her children; and particularly, that she had never suffered them to be a moment idle.

JOHNSON: "I wish, madam, you would educate me too; for I have been an idle fellow all my life."

"I am sure, sir," said she, "you have not been idle."

JOHNSON: "Nay, madam, it is very true: and that gentleman there (pointing to Boswell) has been idle. He was idle at Edinburgh. His father sent him to Glasgow, where he continued to be idle. He then came to London, where he has been very idle; and now he is going to Utrecht, where he will be as idle as ever."

Boswell asked the Doctor privately why he had exposed him in such a way?

JOHNSON: "Pooh, pooh! they know nothing about you, and will think of it no more."

Having observed at one of the stages that Boswell ostenta-

tiously gave the coachman a shilling, though sixpence was the common fee, Johnson, with that strict care for rectitude which always influenced him, even in apparently trifling concerns, rated his friend soundly, on the ground that such conduct tended to make the coachman dissatisfied with all the rest of the passengers, who gave him only his due.

They stopped a night at Colchester, a town of which Johnson spoke with reverence, as having stood a siege for Charles the First. At supper he made the following memorable deliverance: "Some people have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my own part, I mind my belly very studiously and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else."

Earnest in all things, our Author was peculiarly earnest in his feeding operations. Mr. Vincy's "portable theory" was also his: "Life wants padding." Eating was, with him, if not one of the fine arts, at least one of the great sciences. He threw his whole soul into his mouth. His looks seemed fastened to his plate while he ate; he would neither speak nor listen until the one business of the table was got over; the veins of his forehead swelled; and he actually perspired in the work of satisfying his appetite. Instead of ridiculing such coarseness, and expressing our disgust at gluttony and the rest, let us turn our eyes back to the impransus period of Johnson's life—his "dinnerless" days—and try to fancy the agony of being without a meal while such an appetite raged within.

Enjoying all meals thus heartily, Johnson, of course, looked for unusually great things from a *special* invitation—to dinner, for example. When disappointed in his expectations he had been heard to say, "This was a good dinner enough, to be sure; but it was not a dinner to ask a man to." When, on the other hand, all went gloriously, it was as good as a feast to see his delight: "Sir, we could not have had a better dinner had there been a Synod of Cooks."

After supper the conversation turned for a moment upon that studied behaviour which so many in all times have thought it

right to practise. Johnson expressed his disapproval of it, and said: "I never considered whether I should be a grave man, or a merry man, but just let inclination, for the time, have its course." In other words, Johnson had *lived*, while most people only torment themselves with arranging how to live.

Boswell, in his sentimental way, began to imagine whole hosts of possible miseries which might await him on the continent. While he was weaving his silly fancies, a moth fluttered into the flame of the candle and was burned; upon which Johnson slily but gravely remarked, "That creature was its own tormentor, and I believe its name was Boswell."

They arrived at Harwich next day, and dined at an inn by themselves. Boswell happened to say it would be "terrible" if his friend should be detained long in such a dull place.

JOHNSON: "Don't, sir, accustom yourself to use big words for little matters. It would not be terrible, though I were to be detained some time here."

Johnson hated sentiment, as one of the sickliest of shams. "These," he would say, "are the distresses of sentiment, which a man who is really to be pitied has no leisure to feel. The sight of people who want food and raiment is so common in great cities, that a surly fellow like me has no compassion to spare for wounds given only to vanity or softness." Speaking of a lady who had been disappointed of an inheritance, some one remarked, "——will grieve at her friend's disappointment." Said Johnson, "She will suffer as much perhaps as your horse did when your cow miscarried." He's a plain-spoken man, this hero of ours!

The two friends visited the church, and, on approaching the altar, Johnson said: "Now that you are going to leave your native country, recommend yourself to the protection of your CREATOR and REDEEMER." Is it not, as we said once before, a species of grand moral training to trace the steps of this noble man?

They walked down to the beach together; took a warm embrace; and parted.

Boswell: "I hope, sir, you will not forget me in my absence."

JOHNSON: "Nay, sir, it is more likely you should forget me,
than that I should forget you."



A PARTING.

134

The Doctor remained for some time standing on the beach, after the vessel had put out to sea—rolling his body in the usual fashion: he then walked back into the town, and disappeared from the straining eyes of his devout worshipper on the deck.

That Boswell's admiration of Dr. Johnson was sincere and deep cannot be doubted; and it is equally certain that the other's heart had been already touched with a real feeling of kindliness and esteem towards his reverential disciple. Had Boswell's reverence been more straight-backed, however, Johnson's kindliness would not have been the less, while his esteem would certainly have been much the greater.

CHAPTER XV.

LITERARY CLUB FOUNDED—HYPOCHONDRIA—JOHNSON'S "SHAKES-PEARE"—INTRODUCTION TO THE THRALES.

EARLY in 1764, Johnson paid a visit to the Langtons, in Lincolnshire, where he spent a very pleasant time. One or two memoranda of his visit have been preserved.

Speaking of a worthy clergyman in the district, Johnson observed: "This man, Sir, fills up the duties of his life well. I approve of him, but could not imitate him." So we see he did right in keeping out of the Church.

To a lady who kept aloof from her neighbours because she did not see what good she could do them by social intercourse, he said: "What good, Madam, do you expect to have it in your power to do them? It is showing them respect, and that is doing them good."

He and Mr. Langton drove out together in a coach one day; and, on Mr. Langton's complaining of a slight sickness, Johnson insisted upon their betaking themselves to the outside and sitting in the open air. When seated, he observed: "That countryman in the field there will probably be thinking, 'If these two madmen should come down, what would become of me?'"

But perhaps the most characteristic fact about this visit is, that Johnson argued with Mr. Langton, senior, so strongly in defence of the doctrines of the Romish Church, that the old gentleman went to his grave in the belief that the Doctor belonged to that Communion. Like all great talkers, Johnson could speak, and delighted to speak, on any side of a disputed question; and here is what he once said on the opposite side of this Romish question,

LITERARY CLUB FOUNDED.

136

to a lady who was leaving for the continent: "You are going where the ostentatious pomp of Church ceremonies attracts the imagination; but, if they want to persuade you to change, you must remember that by increasing your faith, you may be persuaded to become Turk." "The human soul is hospitable, and will entertain conflicting sentiments and contradictory opinions with much impartiality."

During his recent journey to Harwich, our Author had astounded an old Englishwoman by an unhesitating advocacy of the Inquisition, and amazed a young Dutchman by as determined a defence of the torture of prisoners to force a confession.

"Turn him to any cause of policy, The Gordian knot of it he will unloose, Familiar as his garter."

Shortly after his return to town in February, the famous Literary Club was founded. Sir Joshua Reynolds had first proposed it, and Johnson had warmly seconded the proposal. The original members were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, Edmund Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Beauclerk, Mr. Langton, Oliver Goldsmith, Mr. Chamier, and Sir John Hawkins. Their meeting-place was the Turk's Head, in Gerard Street, Soho. At first, and for ten years after, the club met once a week, at seven o'clock, supped together, and generally continued their sederunt well into the next morning. Sir John Hawkins, who, in his "Life of Johnson," calls himself a "seceder" from this society, gives, as the reason of his "withdrawal," the late hours, which, he says, did not suit his domestic arrangements. But the truth seems to be that the knight had one evening been so rude to Edmund Burke that, when he next made his appearance, his reception was so very indifferent that he never ventured to show face again. It is at his expense also that the world has received Johnson's magnificent coinage of a new word; the minting of which came about thus: The knight having refused to pay his share of the reckoning for supper, because he usually ate no supper at home, Johnson remarked: "Sir John is a very unclubable man!"

Our Author this year wrote, in the *Critical Review*, a notice of Goldsmith's "Traveller,"—a poem to which he had himself contributed nine lines, two of them pure gold, notwithstanding their sober hue:

"How small, of all that human hearts endure, That part, which kings or laws can cause or cure!"

"Good Friday, April 20, 1764.—I have made no reformation: I have lived totally useless, more sensual in thought, and more addicted to wine and meat. My indolence since my last reception of the sacrament, has sunk into grosser sluggishness, and my dissipation spread into wilder negligence. My thoughts have been clouded with sensuality; and, except that from the beginning of this year I have, in some measure, forborne excess of strong drinks, my appetites have predominated over my reason. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year, and perceive that incidents and intelligence pass over me without leaving any impression. This is not the life to which heaven is promised."

Johnson's sacred days, which he dedicated to solemn thought and high communion with his own soul, were New Year's Day, the day of his wife's death, Good Friday, Easter Day, and his own birthday. This year he says: "I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving: having, from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing, therefore, is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Johnson's constitutional easiness of mind and body had no doubt been fed by the pension which had set him above the fear of want. He needed to be *compelled* to work; but let us always note that he never hugs himself in indolence, and says to his own spirit that it is *right* for it to lie at ease. He dreads the oncoming of complete stagnation of mind and total abandonment to indulgence, and fights against them as against his direct foes. His conscience was ever at work, even when it seemed quite asleep.

About this time he suffered a violent attack of his old enemy,

HYPOCHONDRIA.

Hypochondria. We may measure the ferocity of the assault by the fact that, during its continuance, he felt compelled to seclude himself from all company; a fearful indication of his deplorable mental state—for the sight of a human face was to this man always as a ray of light to one sitting in thick darkness. A fine saying of his, made to a gentleman whose conversation he valued very highly, will illustrate both his politeness and his love or friendly communion, and will deepen our sense of the loss he now sustained. "I am very unwilling to be left alone, Sir, and therefore I go with my company down the first pair of stairs, in some hopes that they may, perhaps, return again; I go with you, SIR, AS FAR AS THE STREET DOOR." What delicacy! what feeling! what originality! But from all this social converse he was now for a time cut off. Dr. Adams, as an old friend, was allowed to visit him; and found him sighing, groaning, talking to himself, and restlessly walking from room to room. "I would consent," said he, "to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits." We do not profess to be psychologists enough to explain his case; but the facts must be stated in all fulness in any work which lays claim to being a Life of Doctor Johnson.

The trouble wore off; and in the August of this year we find him writing thus:—

"TO JOSHUA REYNOLDS, ESQ., IN LEICESTER FIELDS, LONDON.

"At the Rev. Mr. Percy's, at Easton Maudit,
Northamptonshire, (by Castle Ashby),
Aug. 19, 1764.

"DEAR SIR,

"I did not hear of your sickness till I heard likewise of your recovery, and therefore escaped that part of your pain, which every man must feel, to whom you are known as you are known to me.

"Having had no particular account of your disorder, I know not in what state it has left you. If the amusement of my company can exhilarate the languor of a slow recovery, I will not delay a day to come to you; for I know not how I can so effectually promote my own pleasure as by pleasing you, or my

138

own interest as by preserving you, in whom, if I should lose you, I should lose almost the only man whom I call a friend.

"Pray let me hear of you from yourself, or from dear Miss Reynolds. Make my compliments to Mr. Mudge. I am, dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate

"And most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Easter Day, 1765:—"I purpose again to partake of the blessed sacrament: yet when I consider how vainly I have hitherto resolved at this annual commemoration of my Saviour's death, to regulate my life by his laws, I am almost afraid to renew my resolutions."

"Since the last Easter I have reformed no evil habit; my time has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me. Good Lord, deliver me!"

"July 2.—I paid Mr. Simpson ten guineas, which he had formerly lent me in my necessity, and for which Tetty expressed her gratitude."

"Tetty expressed her gratitude!"—and this next good deed shall be done in her name:—

"July 8.—I lent Mr. Simpson ten guineas more."

"July 16.—I received seventy-five pounds. Lent Mr. Davies twenty-five."

The other prominent events of this year, so far as our Author is concerned, were his obtaining the degree of Doctor of Laws from Trinity College, Dublin; his publication (at last) of his edition of Shakespeare; and his introduction into the family of the Thrales.

The first was a quite spontaneous honour conferred upon a deserving man; the second has added little to Johnson's fame, and has brought down upon him much hostile criticism; to the third our Author was infinitely indebted then, and the world has been infinitely indebted since.

To that in Shakespeare's Plays, of which strong common sense can constitute itself a judge, Johnson has done ample justice; but dramatic subtleties, niceties, by-play, delicate touches, poetic fancies so ethereal that an Ariel had to be created to embody them, philosophy so profound that the world's wisest ones keep poring even now over "Hamlet" and "The Tempest," and confess sorrowfully that they can find no bottom yet, creative imagination so divine that the drama proper may be said to have ceased with him its Perfect Head, observation at once so wide and so minute that we can only think of it as a kind of grand human omniscience, passion so fearful that the deep places of nature have all been upturned, human sympathy so intense and universal that he who felt it all seems not a man but Man; in a word, all that we, in this age, mean by the name Shakespeare, -of that, Doctor Johnson at the best had only the very faintest glimpse, and at the worst had no vision at all, or only a quite distorted one. In all essential respects Johnson's edition of Shakespeare must be pronounced a failure. The Preface to it, indeed, contains some good writing; but even here the words seem to have come at the dictation of a cold critical judgment, and not from the inspiration of an impassioned sympathetic feeling. Of course, Johnson admitted Shakespeare's supremacy in our literature, and would often sound his praises in the most telling and truthful tones. Somebody was, on one occasion, raising Corneille above Shakespeare. "Corneille," says Johnson, "is to Shakespeare as a clipped hedge is to a forest." That is capitally said; but our Author was himself constantly forgetting his own verdict, and has gone through the plays looking for clipped hedges, and grumbling because he could not find them, while the majestic forest-trees were all the time hidden from his eyes. Commonplace is stamped upon the whole thing. Johnson cannot have taken kindly to the work, else he never would have dawdled over it for so many years. He had promised to do it, and that was the only spur that urged him on; but it is not thus that great works are produced.

It was a happy chance which brought our Author into the midst of the Thrale family. Mr. Thrale was a rich English

brewer, and member of Parliament for the borough of Southwark; his lady was of good Welsh extraction, lively, clever, and fond of literature; fond, at least, of literary talk. From this time forward Johnson used their house almost as a home. His gloom was dispelled by the sight of the happy faces which the Thrales delighted to gather round their board; his roughnesses were smoothed a little, and his irregularities somewhat lessened, by the necessary restraints of such society; while his talents had every opportunity of display and even of development, from the sort of company with whom his host and hostess were wise enough to bring him into contact. The atmosphere of that house was genial, in every sense of the word: Genius was welcomed at the door, and Geniality presided at the table.

Here are a few interesting and touching notes from one of our Author's Journals of this period:—

- "At church, Oct.-65.
- "To avoid all singularity. Bonaventura.
- "To come in before service, and compose my mind by meditation, or by reading some portions of Scripture. *Tetty*.
- "If I can hear the sermon, to attend it, unless attention be more troublesome than useful.
- "To consider the act of prayer as a reposal of myself upon God, and a resignation of all into his holy hand."

Is not that a naïve resolution?—"If I can hear the sermon, to attend it, UNLESS ATTENTION BE MORE TROUBLESOME THAN USEFUL." Then let us mark the one word, "Tetty." It is only a word; but how eloquent it is! See, too, how it stands there quite by itself, apart from all the rest, as if the very syllables of it were sacred! "Our dead are never dead to us until we have forgotten them; they can be injured by us, they can be wounded; they know all our penitence, all our aching sense that their place is empty, all the kisses we bestow on the smallest relic of their presence."

THE DOCTOR AN ABSTAINER.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DOCTOR AN ABSTAINER—CONVERSATIONS—INTERVIEW WITH THE KING.

(1766—1767.)

Boswell returned to London in February, 1766, and found Johnson occupying a good house in Johnson's Court, Fleet Street; in which he had set apart one room on the ground-floor for Mrs. Williams, and the garret, as usual, for Mr. Levett. The faithful Barber was still at his post. Our Author's way of living had also undergone a change: he now eschewed wine, and drank only water or lemonade,—driven to that reformation by medical authority mainly, though impelled a little, we may believe, by one or other of the many condemnatory decisions arrived at in his numerous courts of conscience. He and Boswell had several good talks together, either at his own house or at their old and favourite haunt, the Mitre Tavern. Occasionally, one or two other gentlemen were present. We shall run the several evenings into one, and give the best bits of the conversation in a single view.

Boswell mentioned that Voltaire, in a conversation with him, had distinguished Pope and Dryden thus:—"Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six; but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling: Pope's go at a steady even trot."

Boswell spoke of a person whom Johnson knew, and whose creed was, "As man dies like a dog, let him lie like a dog."—
Johnson: "If he dies like a dog, let him lie like a dog."

Boswell added that this man said to him, "I hate mankind, for I think myself one of the best of them, and I know how bad I am."

—Johnson: "Sir, he must be very singular in his opinion if he thinks himself one of the best of men, for none of his friends think him so."

Boswell mentioned Hume's notion, that all who are happy are equally happy; a little Miss with a new gown at a dancing-school ball, a general at the head of a victorious army, and an orator after having made an eloquent speech in a great assembly.

—Johnson: "Sir, that all who are happy are equally happy, is not true. A peasant and a philosopher may be equally satisfied, but not equally happy. Happiness consists in the multiplicity of agreeable consciousness. A peasant has not capacity for having equal happiness with a philosopher."

Boswell remarked that, when abroad, he had spent some time with Rousseau in his own wild retreat, and had enjoyed many pleasant hours in Italy with Mr. Wilkes.

JOHNSON: "It seems, Sir, you have kept very good company abroad, Rousseau and Wilkes!"-Boswell: "My dear Sir, you don't call Rousseau bad company. Do you really think him a bad man?"-JOHNSON: "Sir, if you are talking jestingly of this, I don't talk with you. If you mean to be serious, I think him one of the worst of men; a rascal, who ought to be hunted out of Three or four nations have expelled society, as he has been. him, and it is a shame that he is protected in this country."— Boswell: "I don't deny, Sir, but that his novel may, perhaps, do harm; but I cannot think his intention was bad."-Johnson: "Sir, that will not do. We cannot prove any man's intention to You may shoot a man through the head, and say you intended to miss him; but the judge will order you to be An alleged want of intention, when evil is committed, will not be allowed in a court of justice. Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations."-Boswell: "Sir, do you think him as bad a man as

Voltaire?"—Johnson: "Why, Sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them."

Speaking of convents:-

JOHNSON: "If convents should be allowed at all, they should only be retreats for persons unable to serve the public, or who have served it. It is our first duty to serve society; and after we have done that, we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls. A youthful passion for abstracted devotion should not be encouraged."

On subordination :-

JOHNSON: "So far is it from being true that men are naturally equal, that no two people can be half an hour together, but one shall acquire an evident superiority over the other."

A young gentleman teased Johnson with an account of the infidelity of his servant, who, he said, would not believe in the Bible because he could not read it in the original languages.

JOHNSON: "Why, foolish fellow, has he any better authority for almost everything that he believes?"

Boswell: "Then the vulgar, Sir, never can know they are right, but must submit themselves to the learned."

JOHNSON: "To be sure, Sir. The vulgar are the children of the state, and must be taught like children."

Boswell: "Then, Sir, a poor Turk must be a Mahometan, just as a poor Englishman must be a Christian?"

JOHNSON: "Why, yes, Sir; and what then? This now is such stuff as I used to talk to my mother, when I first began to think myself a clever fellow; and she ought to have whipped me for it."

GOLDSMITH: "I think, Mr. Johnson, you don't go near the theatres now. You give yourself no more concern about a new play than if you had never had anything to do with the stage."— JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, our tastes greatly alter. The lad does not care for the child's rattle, and the old man does not care for the young man's whore."—GOLDSMITH: "Nay, Sir, but your Muse was not a whore."—JOHNSON: "Sir, I do not think she was. But as we advance in the journey of life, we drop some of the things

which have pleased us; whether it be that we are fatigued, and don't choose to carry so many things any farther, or that we find other things which we like better."-Boswell: "But, Sir, why don't you give us something in some other way?"—Goldsmith: "Ay, Sir, we have a claim upon you."-Johnson: "No, Sir, I am not obliged to do any more. No man is obliged to do as much as he can do. A man is to have part of his life to himself If a soldier has fought a good many campaigns, he is not to be blamed if he retires to ease and tranquillity. A physician, who has practised long in a great city, may be excused if he retires to a small town and takes less practice. Now, Sir, the good I can do by my conversation bears the same proportion to the good I can do by my writings, that the practice of a physician, retired to a small town, does to his practice in a great city."—Boswell: "But I wonder, Sir, you have not more pleasure in writing than in not writing."—Johnson: "Sir, you may wonder."

Talking of verse-making:-

Johnson: "The great difficulty is, to know when you have made good ones. When composing, I have generally had them in my mind, perhaps fifty at a time, walking up and down in my room; and then I have written them down, and often, from laziness, have written only half lines. I have written a hundred lines in a day. I remember I wrote a hundred lines of 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' in a day. Doctor (turning to Goldsmith), I am not quite idle; I made one line t'other day; but I made no more."
—Goldsmith: "Let us hear it; we'll put a bad one to it."—John son: "No, sir; I have forgot it."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

" March 9, 1766. Johnson's Court, Fleet Street.

"DEAR SIR,

"What your friends have done, that from your departure till now nothing has been heard of you, none of us are able to inform the rest; but as we are all neglected alike, no one thinks himself entitled to the privilege of complaint.

" I should have known nothing of you or of Langton, from the

time that dear Miss Langton left us, had not I met Mr. Simpson, of Lincoln, one day in the street, by whom I was informed that Mr. Langton, your mamma, and yourself, had been all ill, but that you were all recovered.

"That sickness should suspend your correspondence I did not wonder; but hoped that it would be renewed at your recovery.

"Since you will not inform us where you are, or how you live, I know not whether you desire to know any thing of us. However, I will tell you that THE CLUB subsists; but we have the loss of Burke's company since he has been engaged in public business, in which he has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his [first] appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House for repealing the Stamp Act, which were publicly commended by Mr. Pitt, and filled the town with wonder.

"Burke is a great man by nature, and is expected soon to attain civil greatness. I am grown greater too, for I have maintained the newspapers these many weeks; and, what is greater still, I have risen every morning since New Year's Day, at about eight: when I was up, I have indeed done but little; yet it is no slight advancement to obtain for so many hours more the consciousness of being.

"I wish you were in my new study; I am now writing the first letter in it; I think it looks very pretty about me.

"Dyer is constant at THE CLUB; Hawkins is remiss: I am not over diligent. Dr. Nugent, Dr. Goldsmith, and Mr. Reynolds are very constant. Mr. Lye is printing his Saxon and Gothic Dictionary; all THE CLUB subscribes.

"You will pay my best respects to all my Lincolnshire friends.

"I am, dear Sir, most affectionately yours,

"Sam. Johnson."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

" May 10, 1766. Johnson's Court, Fleet Street.

"DEAR SIR,

"In supposing that I should be more than commonly affected by the death of Peregrine Langton [Bennet's uncle] you were not mistaken: he was one of those whom I loved at once by instinct and by reason. I have seldom indulged more hope of any thing than of being able to improve our acquaintance to friendship. Many a time have I placed myself again at Langton, and imagined the pleasure with which I should walk to Partney in a summer morning; but this is no longer possible. We must now endeavour to preserve what is left us—his example of piety and economy. I hope you make what inquiries you can, and write down what is told you. The little things which distinguish domestic characters are soon forgotten: if you delay to inquire, you will have no information: if you neglect to write, information will be vain.

"His art of life certainly deserves to be known and studied. He lived in plenty and elegance upon an income which to many would appear indigent, and to most, scanty. How he lived, therefore, every man has an interest in knowing. His death, I hope, was peaceful; it was surely happy.

"I wish I had written sooner, lest, writing now, I should renew your grief; but I would not forbear saying what I have now said.

"This loss is, I hope, the only misfortune of a family to whom no misfortune at all should happen, if my wishes could avert it. Let me know how you all go on. Has Mr. Langton got him the little horse that I recommended? It would do him good to ride about his estate in fine weather.

"Be pleased to make my compliments to Mrs. Langton, and to dear Miss Langton, and Miss Di, and Miss Juliet, and to everybody else.

"THE CLUB holds very well together. Monday is my night [in the chair]. I continue to rise tolerably well, and read more than I did. I hope something will yet come on it. I am, Sir,

"Your most affectionate servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

This year (1766) Johnson spent several months—from Midsummer till after Michaelmas—at Mr. Thrale's: and one month, afterwards, at Oxford. He published nothing in his own name during this period; but he wrote the Preface to a volume of Miscellanies by his old friend Mrs. Williams, and several of the pieces which the volume comprised. An amusing account of this publication has been left us by a lady well acquainted with Mrs. Williams:—

"As to her poems," the lady writes, "she many years attempted to publish them; the half-crowns she had got towards the publication, she confessed to me, went for necessaries, and that the greatest pain she ever felt was from the appearance of defrauding her subscribers: But what can I do? The Doctor [Johnson] always puts me off with, 'Well, we'll think about it,' and Goldsmith says, 'Leave it to me.' However, two of her friends, under her directions, made a new subscription at a crown, the whole price of the work, and in a very little time raised sixty pounds. At length the work was published."

One of the poems, "On the Death of Stephen Grey," the electrician, seemed to Boswell so thoroughly Johnsonian, that he was emboldened to ask Mrs. Williams directly if it was not his. "Sir," said she, a little angrily, "I wrote that poem before I had the honour of Dr. Johnson's acquaintance." Johnson afterwards remarked: "It is true, Sir, that she wrote it before she was acquainted with me; but she has not told you that I wrote it all over again, except two lines."

The following description of Dr. Johnson was given this year in a burlesque poem, called "The Race," by Mercurius Spur, Esq., in which the living English bards were represented as having their poetic claims tested and settled by their different powers of running: they were to

"Prove by their heels the prowess of their head."

"Here Johnson comes,—unblest with outward grace, His rigid morals stamp'd upon his face,
While strong conceptions struggle in his brain:
(For even wit is brought to bed with pain:)
To view him, porters with their loads would rest,
And babes cling frightened to the nurse's breast.
With looks convulsed, he roars in pompous strain,
And, like an angry lion, shakes his mane.

The nine, with terror struck, who ne'er had seen Aught human with so terrible a mien, Debating whether they should stay or run, Virtue steps forth, and claims him for her son. With gentle speech she warns him now to yield, Nor stain his glories in the doubtful field; But wrapt in conscious worth, content sit down, Since Fame, resolved his various pleas to crown, Though forced his present claim to disavow, Had long reserved a chaplet for his brow. He bows, obeys; for Time shall first expire, Ere Johnson stay, when Virtue bids retire."

But we can suffer the wits and humorists to make themselves merry over our hero's peculiarities; for, while they laugh and joke, handsome compensation is awaiting their butt. In the February of 1767, our Author was honoured by a private conversation with the King. The meeting took place in the library of the Queen's House, which Johnson had been in the habit of frequenting for literary purposes. We shall give an account of it in Boswell's own words.

"His Majesty having been informed of his occasional visits, was pleased to signify a desire that he should be told when Dr. Johnson came next to the library. Accordingly, the next time that Johnson did come, as soon as he was fairly engaged with a book, on which, while he sat by the fire, he seemed quite intent, Mr. Barnard stole round to the apartment where the King was, and, in obedience to his Majesty's commands, mentioned that Dr. Johnson was then in the library. His Majesty said he was at leisure, and would go to him; upon which Mr. Barnard took one of the candles that stood on the King's table, and lighted his Majesty through a suite of rooms, till they came to a private door into the library, of which his Majesty had the key. Being entered, Mr. Barnard stepped forward hastily to Dr. Johnson, who was still in a profound study, and whispered him, 'Sir, here is the King.' Johnson started up, and stood still. His Majesty approached him, and at once was courteously easy.

"His Majesty began by observing, that he understood he came sometimes to the library: and then mentioned his having heard

INTERVIEW WITH THE KING.

150

that the Doctor had been lately at Oxford, asking him if he was not fond of going thither. To which Johnson answered, that he was indeed fond of going to Oxford sometimes, but was likewise glad to come back again.

"His Majesty inquired if he was then writing anything. answered he was not, for he had pretty well told the world what he knew, and must now read to acquire more knowledge. King, as it should seem, with a view to urge him to rely on his own stores as an original writer, and to continue his labours, then said, 'I do not think you borrow much from anybody.' Johnson said, he thought he had already done his part as a writer. should have thought so, too,' said the King, 'if you had not written so well.'-Johnson observed to me, upon this, that 'no man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a king to pay. It was decisive.' When asked by another friend, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, whether he made any reply to this high compliment, he answered, 'No, Sir. When the King had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my sovereign.' Perhaps no man who had spent his whole life in courts could have shown a more nice and dignified sense of true politeness than Johnson did in this instance.

"His Majesty having observed to him that he supposed he must have read a great deal, Johnson answered, that he thought more than he read; that he had read a great deal in the early part of his life, but having fallen into ill health, he had not been able to read much, compared with others; for instance, he said he had not read much, compared with Dr. Warburton. Upon which the King said, that he heard Dr. Warburton was a man of such general knowledge, that you could scarce talk with him on any subject on which he was not qualified to speak; and that his learning resembled Garrick's acting, in its universality. His Majesty then talked of the controversy between Warburton and Lowth, which he seems to have read, and asked Johnson what he thought of it. Johnson answered, 'Warburton has most general, most scholastic learning: Lowth is the more correct I do not know which of them calls names best.' The King was pleased to say he was of the same opinion, adding,

'You do not think, then, Dr. Johnson, that there was much argument in the case?' Johnson said, he did not think there was. 'Why, truly,' said the King, 'when once it comes to calling names, argument is pretty well at an end.'

"His Majesty then asked him what he thought of Lord Lyttelton's History, which was then just published. Johnson said, he thought his style pretty good, but that he had blamed Henry the Second rather too much. 'Why,' said the King, 'they seldom do these things by halves.' 'No, Sir,' answered Johnson, 'not to kings.' But fearing to be misunderstood, he proceeded to explain himself; and immediately subjoined, 'That for those who spoke worse of kings than they deserved, he could find no excuse; but that he could more easily conceive how some might speak better of them than they deserved, without any ill intention; for, as kings had much in their power to give, those who were favoured by them would frequently, from gratitude, exaggerate their praises; and as this proceeded from a good motive, it was certainly excusable, as far as error could be excusable.'

"The King then asked him what he thought of Dr. Hill. Johnson answered, that he was an ingenious man, but had no veracity; and immediately mentioned, as an instance of it, an assertion of that writer, that he had seen objects magnified to a much greater degree by using three or four microscopes at a time that by using one. 'Now,' added Johnson, 'every one acquainted with microscopes knows, that the more of them he looks through, the less the object will appear.' 'Why,' replied the King, 'this is not only telling an untruth, but telling it clumsily; for, if that be the case, every one who can look through a microscope will be able to detect him.'

"'I now,' said Johnson to his friends, when relating what had passed, 'began to consider that I was depreciating this man in the estimation of his sovereign, and thought it was time for me to say something that might be more favourable.' He added, therefore, that Dr. Hill was, notwithstanding, a very curious observer; and if he would have been contented to tell the world no more than he knew, he might have been a very considerable man, and needed not to have recourse to such mean expedients to raise his reputation.

INTERVIEW WITH THE KING.

152

"His Majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr. Johnson to undertake it. Johnson signified his readiness to comply with his Majesty's wishes.

"During the whole of this interview Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect; but still in his firm, manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee and in the drawing-room. After the King withdrew, Johnson showed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr. Barnard, 'Sir, they may talk of the King as they will, but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen.' And he afterwards observed to Mr. Langton, 'Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Louis the Fourteenth or Charles the Second.'"

Retailing the incidents of this memorable interview at Sir Joshua Reynolds's one evening, Johnson observed, "I found his Majesty wished I should talk, and I made it my business to talk. I find it does a man good to be talked to by his sovereign: a man cannot be in a passion."

After the Doctor had finished his relation, Goldsmith started up and exclaimed: "Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it."

Yes; Johnson did acquit himself well, and in critical circumstances: he proved himself here, as at all the testing periods of his life, in feeling a gentleman, and in act a man.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business?
HE SHALL STAND BEFORE KINGS."

Yet this is the same Samuel Johnson whom we saw, not so very many years ago, roaming the London streets at midnight, in company with poor Savage, because the happy sheltered world could find no room for him within its doors.

"Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

CHAPTER XVII.

AT LICHFIELD—A TENDER ADIEU—CONVERSATIONS—DR. PERCY SNUBBED.

(1767-1768.)

DURING the year 1767, our Author spent three months at his native Lichfield.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT MR. ROTHWELL'S, PERFUMER, IN NEW BOND-STREET, LONDON.

" Lichfield, October 10, 1767.

"DEAR SIR,

"That you have been all summer in London is one more reason for which I regret my long stay in the country. I hope that you will not leave the town before my return. We have here only the chance of vacancies in the passing carriages, and I have bespoken one that may, if it happens, bring me to town on the 14th of this month; but this is not certain.

"It will be a favour if you communicate this to Mrs. Williams: I long to see all my friends.

"I am, dear sir,

"Your most humble servant, "Sam. Johnson."

He does not get to town on the fourteenth; for on the seventeenth he has to act a part in a scene so holy and so pure that one feels as if a special religious service were necessary to prepare us for beholding it aright.

"Sunday, Oct. 18, 1767.—Yesterday, Oct. 17, at about ten in the morning, I took my leave for ever of my dear old friend, Catherine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She buried

my father, my brother, and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old.

"I desired all to withdraw, then told her that we were to part for ever; that as Christians, we should part with prayer; and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me; and held up her poor hands, as she lay in bed, with great fervour, while I prayed, kneeling by her, nearly in the following words:—

. "'Almighty and most merciful Father, whose loving-kindness is over all thy works, behold, visit, and relieve this thy servant, who is grieved with sickness. Grant that the sense of her weakness may add strength to her faith, and seriousness to her repentance. And grant that, by the help of thy Holy Spirit, after the pains and labours of this short life, we may all obtain everlasting happiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for whose sake hear our prayers. Amen.'

"I then kissed her. She told me that to part was the greatest pain she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes, and great emotion of tenderness, the same hopes. We kissed and parted. I humbly hope to meet again, and to part no more."

How beautiful is that farewell, in spite of all its grief!

"Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."

There are no big words there, no antithetically turned sentences, no carefully rounded periods, no studiously elaborated thoughts: nothing but simple, child-like feeling welling up out of the inner springs of a noble nature, and flowing just as it will. After looking at a scene like that we may well ask, where is the rough part of Samuel Johnson? Where did the bearish element in him lie? The Earl of Eglintoune once expressed his regret that Johnson had not been educated with more refinement, and lived more in polished society. "No, no, my lord," said Signor Baretti, "do with him what you would he would always have been a bear." True," answered the Earl, with a smile, "but he would have been a dancing bear." That was very witty, and very funny, perhaps; but all these clever little jokes are shrivelled into nothingness

before the grand deliverance of Oliver Goldsmith, which sprang from that simple and sincere heart to which alone it is given to see the pure and the good. "Johnson," said he, "has a roughness in his manner, but no man alive has a more tender heart. He has nothing of the bear but his skin." And as we stand by that bedside, and see that solemn parting, we feel that we have got far below the skin, right into the heart of the man—his inmost heart—where the gentleman dwells. It is a scene to say grace over.

Immediately on his return to London we find him engaged in one of his many good deeds, the interesting details of which are contained in a letter to Mr. William Drummond, bookseller, Edinburgh, from which we extract the following:—

"I must take the liberty of engaging you in an office of charity. Mrs. Heely, the wife of Mr. Heely, who had lately some office in your theatre, is my near relation, and now in great distress. They wrote me word of their situation some time ago, to which I returned them an answer which raised hopes of more than it is proper for me to give them. Their representation of their affairs I have discovered to be such as cannot be trusted; and at this distance, though their case requires haste, I know not how to act. She, or her daughters, may be heard of at Canongate Head. I must beg, Sir, that you will inquire after them, and let me know what is to be done. I am willing to go to ten pounds, and will transmit you such a sum, if, upon examination, you find it likely to be of use. If they are in immediate want advance them what you think proper. What I could do I would do for the woman, having no great reason to pay much regard to Heely himself.

"Whatever you advance within ten pounds shall be immediately returned to you, or paid as you shall order. I trust wholly to your judgment."

Little records of quiet charities like this lift the life of Samuel Johnson clear out of the region of mere literary biography into that realm of which the other must acknowledge itself only a small province—the Story of a *Man's doings* in a sorrowing and struggling world. The notices have to be gathered from his Diaries, which were written for his own eye alone, and purely for

156 "PRESS'D WITH THE LOAD OF LIFE."

purposes of self-discipline; from his Prayers and Meditations, which were written as silent memorials of awful communings with his own soul; from his letters, written to those who could help him in his benevolent acts; but never from any ostentatious display of them by himself. His literary powers he made no secret of, he seized every opportunity of giving them air; but his goodness, any little bit of conduct which might be set down to the credit of his heart rather than of his head—that he put aside with exquisite delicacy. With all his talking, the deep things of the conscience Johnson told to none. The delicate things of the heart must be tenderly handled, else they will break: when fine work is being done the less noise made the better.

With the exception of a Dedication to the King of a "Treatise on the Globes," and a Prologue to Goldsmith's Comedy, "The Good-Natured Man," we do not come upon any writings of our Author's during these two years (1767—1768). An affecting indication of Johnson's state of mind when composing the Prologue is found in two such lines as these:

"Press'd with the load of life, the weary mind Surveys the general toil of human kind."

Strange lines to get into the midst of the Prologue to a Comedy; but it has been ever so—sorrow has always dwelt hard by laughter. The Optimist must rise very early in the morning, and keep at it for a long series of mornings, if he would convince a struggling, tearing, fighting, suffering, sinning world, that life is only a good joke after all.

The spring of 1768 Johnson passed at Oxford. Boswell visited him there; and from his memoranda we extract the following conversations:—

BOSWELL: "Do you not think, Sir, that the practice of the law hurts in some degree the nice feeling of honesty?"—Johnson: "Why no, Sir, if you act properly. You are not to deceive your clients with false representations of your opinion; you are not to tell lies to a judge."—Boswell: "But what do you think of supporting a cause which you know to be bad?"—Johnson: "Sir,

you do not know it to be good or bad till the judge determines it. I have said that you are to state facts fairly; so that your thinking. or what you call knowing, a cause to be bad, must be from reasoning, must be from your supposing your arguments to be weak and inconclusive. But, Sir, that is not enough. An argument which does not convince yourself may convince the judge to whom you urge it: and if it does convince him, why, then, Sir, you are wrong, and he is right. It is his business to judge; and you are not to be confident in your own opinion that a cause is bad, but to say all you can for your client, and then hear the judge's opinion."—Boswell: "But, Sir, does not affecting a warmth when you have no warmth, and appearing to be clearly of one opinion when you are in reality of another opinion, does not such dissimulation impair one's honesty? Is there not some danger that a lawyer may put on the same mask in common life in the intercourse with his friends?"—JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir. Everybody knows you are paid for affecting warmth for your client; and it is, therefore, properly no dissimulation: the moment you come from the bar you resume your usual behaviour. Sir, a man will no more carry the artifice of the bar into the common intercourse of society, than a man who is paid for tumbling upon his hands will continue to tumble upon his hands when he should walk on his feet."

Comparing Fielding and Richardson he said, "There is as great a difference between these two as between a man who knows how a watch is made and a man who can tell the hour by looking on the dial-plate." On another occasion, he said that "Richardson had picked the kernel of life, while Fielding was contented with the husk." This was Johnson's way of saying that Richardson drew men, while Fielding only drew manners. The illustrations are good, but certainly do not prove the truth of this estimate of Fielding's powers. Fielding's power covers Richardson's, as dramatic creation always will cover the results of even the finest analytical faculty.

JOHNSON: "I have not been troubled for a long time with authors desiring my opinion of their works. I used once to be sadly plagued with a man who wrote verses, but who literally had

no other notion of a verse, but that it consisted of ten syllables. Lay your knife and your fork across your plate, was to him a verse:

Lay your knife and your fork across your plate.

As he wrote a great number of verses, he sometimes by chance made good ones, though he did not know it."

Boswell spoke of Scotland's advancement in literature.

Johnson: "Sir, you have learnt a little from us, and you think yourselves very great men. Hume would never have written History, had not Voltaire written it before him. He is an echo of Voltaire."—Boswell: "But, Sir, we have Lord Kames."—Johnson: "You have Lord Kames. Keep him; ha, ha, ha! We don't envy you him. Do you ever see Dr. Robertson?"—Boswell: "Yes, Sir."—Johnson: "Does the dog talk of me?"—Boswell: "Indeed, Sir, he does, and loves you." Boswell pressed him for his opinion of Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland.—Johnson: "Sir, I love Robertson, and I won't talk of his book."

A gentleman maintained the doctrine of the future life of brutes; Johnson, who was a strict conservative in all matters of that sort, and held tenaciously by the orthodox views, winced under the freedom of the other's speculations.

Persistent Gentleman [with great solemnity]: "But really, Sir, when we see a very sensible dog, we don't know what to think of him."

JOHNSON [his eyes twinkling with the brilliant anticipation of the coming retort]: "True, Sir, and when we see a very foolish fellow, we don't know what to think of him." He then rose, strode to the fire, and stood there laughing and exulting. A man must surely be allowed sometimes to laugh at his own joke.

Speaking of Signor Baretti:-

JOHNSON: "His account of Italy is a very entertaining book; and, Sir, I know no man who carries his head higher in conversation than Baretti. There are strong powers in his mind. He has not, indeed, many hooks; but with what hooks he has, he grapples very forcibly."

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

" Oxford, April 18, 1768.

" My DEAR DEAR LOVE,

"You have had a very great loss. To lose an old friend, is to be cut off from a great part of the little pleasure that this life allows. But such is the condition of our nature, that as we live on we must see those whom we love drop successively, and find our circle of relation grow less and less, till we are almost unconnected with the world; and then it must soon be our turn to drop into the grave. There is always this consolation, that we have one Protector, who can never be lost but by our own fault; and every new experience of the uncertainty of all other comforts should determine us to fix our hearts where true joys are to be found. All union with the inhabitants of earth must in time be broken; and all the hopes that terminate here, must on [one] part or other end in disappointment.

"I am glad that Mrs. Adey and Mrs. Cobb do not leave you alone. Pay my respects to them, and the Sewards, and all my friends. When Mr. Porter comes, he will direct you. Let me know of his arrival, and I will write to him.

"When I go back to London, I will take care of your readingglass. Whenever I can do anything for you, remember, my dear darling, that one of my greatest pleasures is to please you.

"The punctuality of your correspondence I consider as a proof of great regard. When we shall see each other I know not, but let us often think on each other, and think with tenderness. Do not forget me in your prayers. I have for a long time back been very poorly; but of what use is it to complain?

"Write often, for your letters always give great pleasure to,
"My dear, your most affectionate

"And most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"I have for a long time back been very poorly; but of what use is it to complain?" Yes; of what use indeed? Yet the long-stifled cry will break forth at times, as in the lines already quoted:

" Press'd with the load of life, the weary mind Surveys the general toil of human kind."

DR. PERCY SNUBBED.

Johnson's affectionate care for his faithful negro servant Francis had, about this time, impelled him to send the lad to school, at Bishop Stortford, in Herts. Here is a precious little letter which he wrote to the boy immediately on his return to town:—

"TO MR. FRANCIS BARBER.

" May 28, 1768.

"DEAR FRANCIS.

160

"I have been very much out of order. I am glad to hear that you are well, and design to come soon to you. I would have you stay at Mrs. Clapp's for the present, till I can determine what we shall do. Be a good boy.

" My compliments to Mrs. Clapp and to Mr. Fowler.

" I am, yours affectionately,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Soon after this Johnson supped at the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, with a magnificent company; but the meeting is, to us, chiefly memorable as having witnessed a very strong case of our Author's roughness, or rudeness, should the word be thought more suitable. In the course of conversation the Doctor inveighed against old Dr. Mounsey, of Chelsea College, as a "fellow who swore and talked bawdy."

DR. PERCY: "I have often been in his company, and never heard him swear or talk bawdy."

MR. DAVIES [after talking aside to Dr. Percy for some time]: "Oh, Sir, I have found out a very good reason why Dr. Percy never heard Mounsey swear or talk bawdy, for he tells me he never saw him but at the Duke of Northumberland's table."

JOHNSON [loudly, to Dr. Percy]: "And so, Sir, you would shield this man from the charge of swearing and talking bawdy, because he did not do so at the Duke of Northumberland's table. Sir, you might as well tell us that you had seen him hold up his hand at the Old Bailey, and he neither swore nor talked bawdy; or that you had seen him in the cart at Tyburn, and he neither swore nor talked bawdy. And is it thus, Sir, that you presume to controvert what I have related?"

The words were not much stronger than Johnson's retorts often were; but the tone in which he spoke them seems to have been unusually offensive, for Percy was hurt, and shortly afterwards left the room.

The fact will not disguise, that our Author was not always very courteous in his manner of arguing a man down. When angered by opposition he would sometimes close the debate thus: "Sir, you don't see your way through that question:" or, "Sir, you talk the language of ignorance." Goldsmith used to say—applying to the Doctor the witty words of Colley Cibber: "There is no arguing with Johnson; for, when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt-end of it." But then, it is wonderful how seldom the pistol misses fire, considering the number of times he shot and the rapidity with which he often had to load his piece. We do not, however, claim perfection for our Author; we admit his fallibility: and, as he himself says, "a fallible man will fail somewhere."

CHAPTER XVIII

CONVERSATIONS—GENERAL PAOLI INTRODUCED—BOSWELL AN OFFENDER—JOHNSON'S "PECCAVI."

(1769.)

Part of the summer of 1769 Johnson spent at Oxford and Lichfield, and in the autumn we find him at Brighton with the Thrales. On his return to town, his friends, as usual, gathered round him evening after evening; and the intellectual feast was again spread before them. His conversation about this time was brilliant beyond comparison with anything we have yet set before the reader.

September 30th: The Mitre Tavern.

Boswell, to set Johnson a-talking, argued for the superior happiness of the savage life.

Johnson: "Sir, there can be nothing more false. The savages have no bodily advantages beyond those of civilised men. They have not better health; and as to care or mental uneasiness, they are not above it, but below it, like bears. No, Sir; you are not to talk such paradox: let me have no more on't. It cannot entertain, far less can it instruct. Lord Monboddo, one of your Scotch judges, talked a great deal of such nonsense. I suffered him, but I will not suffer you."—Boswell: "But, Sir, does not Rousseau talk such nonsense?"—Johnson: "True, Sir; but Rousseau knows he is talking nonsense, and laughs at the world for staring at him."—Boswell: "How so, Sir?"—Johnson: "Why, Sir, a man who talks nonsense so well, must know that he is talking nonsense. But I am afraid (chuckling and laughing) Monboddo does not know that he is talking nonsense."—Boswell: "Is it wrong, then, Sir, to affect singularity, in

order to make people stare?"—Johnson: "Yes, if you do it by propagating error; and, indeed, it is wrong in any way. There is in human nature a general inclination to make people stare; and every wise man has himself to cure of it, and does cure himself. If you wish to make people stare by doing better than others, why, make them stare till they stare their eyes out. But consider how easy it is to make people stare by being absurd. I may do it by going into a drawing-room without my shoes. You remember the gentleman in 'The Spectator,' who had a commission of lunacy taken out against him for his extreme singularity, such as never wearing a wig, but a night-cap. Now, Sir, abstractedly, the night-cap was best: but, relatively, the advantage was overbalanced by his making the boys run after him."

Speaking of London:-

Johnson: "The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom."—Boswell: "The only disadvantage is the great distance at which people live from one another."—Johnson: "Yes, Sir; but that is occasioned by the largeness of it, which is the cause of all the other advantages."—Boswell: "Sometimes I have been in the humour of wishing to retire to a desert."—Johnson: "Sir, you have desert enough in Scotland."

Boswell, being about to marry, was very anxious to get his friend to lighten up by his wisdom and experience the dark future of the prospective relationship. But Johnson did not seem inclined to say much to-night; although at other times he was very ready to speak on this as on most other subjects of sublunary interest. When told once of a gentleman who, although his first marriage had proved a mistake, had nevertheless made a second immediately on the death of his first wife, Johnson said: "It was the triumph of love over experience." On another occasion, he had observed that a man of sense and education should seek a suitable companion in a wife. "It was a miserable thing when the

conversation could only be such as, whether the mutton should be boiled or roasted, and probably a dispute about that." All this and much more he had been got to say upon other occasions; but this evening the intending bridegroom could draw out only the following, in reply to a remark of his that he had censured an acquaintance for marrying a second time on the ground of the implied disrespect to the memory of his first wife:—

JOHNSON: "Not at all, Sir. On the contrary, were he not to marry again, it might be concluded that his first wife had given him a disgust to marriage; but by taking a second wife he pays the highest compliment to the first, by showing that she made him so happy as a married man, that he wishes to be so a second time."

But this about second marriages is not much to the point when an anxious man yearns to know if he ought to marry once. "To the man whose mouth is watering for a peach, it is of no use to offer the largest vegetable marrow."

October 6th: Streatham Villa—Mr. Thrale's Country Residence.

Boswell observed that England was obliged to Scotland for gardeners, almost all the good gardeners being Scotchmen.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, that is because gardening is much more necessary amongst you than with us, which makes so many of your people learn it. It is all gardening with you. Things which grow wild here, must be cultivated with great care in Scotland. Pray, now [throwing himself back in his chair and laughing], are you ever able to bring the sloe to perfection?"

Mrs. Thrale disputed with the Doctor about Prior; she defending that naughty poet. Johnson took the opposite side, of course; said he wrote of love like a man who had never felt it, and recited one of his songs in such a funny way that all except Mrs. Thrale were made to wonder how they could ever have admired such stuff. The lady, however, stood to her guns manfully, until Johnson, who could only trifle for a limited period,

closed the debate with: "My dear lady, talk no more of this. Nonsense can be defended but by nonsense."

Mrs. Thrale then fell a-praising Garrick's talents for light gay poetry; and quoted, as a typical specimen, one of his songs, dwelling fondly on this line:—

"I'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor."

JOHNSON: "Nay, my dear lady, this will never do. Poor David! Smile with the simple. What folly is that? And who would feed with the poor that can help it? No, no; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich."

This is most exquisite fooling.

October 10th: The Doctor's House.

This day beheld the presentation of General Paoli, the Corsican Patriot, to our Author. It was altogether a courtly scene, half-humorous in its stateliness. The General spoke Italian, and Johnson spoke English, Boswell acting as interpreter whenever need arose. When the Doctor approached, Paoli (by way of military salute) said: "From what I have read of your works, Sir, and from what Mr. Boswell has told me of you, I have long held you in great veneration." The General then talked of languages, and the impossibility of translating the spirit of one lan-. guage into another tongue. Johnson replied, with a courtesy that would have done honour to the manners of Lord Chesterfield himself: "Sir, you talk of language, as if you had never done anything else but study it, instead of governing a nation." The General said, " Questo è un troppo gran complimento" [this is too great a compliment]. Johnson answered, "I should have thought so, Sir, if I had not heard you talk."

This delicious interchange of civilities being over, the conversation became general. Paoli asked what Johnson thought about the prevailing infidelity.

JOHNSON: "Sir, this gloom of infidelity, I hope, is only a transient cloud passing through the hemisphere, which will soon be dissipated, and the sun break forth with his usual splendour."—PAOLI: "You think, then, that they will change their principles

CONVERSATIONS.

166

like their clothes."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, if they bestow no more thought on principles than on dress, it must be so."
—Paoli: "A great part of the fashionable infidelity is owing to a desire of showing courage. Men who have no opportunities of showing it as to things in this life, take death and futurity as objects on which to display it."—Johnson: "That is mighty foolish affectation. Fear is one of the passions of human nature, of which it is impossible to divest it. You remember that the Emperor Charles V., when he read upon the tombstone of a Spanish nobleman, 'Here lies one who never knew fear,' wittily said, 'Then he never snuffed a candle with his fingers.'"

That night, sitting at tea in Boswell's room, the Doctor confessed that "General Paoli had the loftiest port of any man he had ever seen." But he would not admit that military men are always the best bred men. "Perfect good breeding," he observed, "consists in having no particular mark of any profession, but a general elegance of manners; whereas, in a military man, you can commonly distinguish the brand of a soldier, Thomme d'épée."

The evening closed with a genuine Johnsonian retort. Boswell had brought up the vexed question of Freedom and Necessity.

JOHNSON: "Sir, we know our will is free, and there's an end on't." Our readers will have perceived long ere now that the Doctor never thinks; he always decides; he never simply disables an opponent; he always leaves him dead upon the field: and no resurrection is conceivable for one whom he has slain.

October 16th: Boswell's Lodgings.

Before dinner, Garrick plays round the Doctor with fond vivacity, takes holds of the breasts of his coat, looks up in his face with lively archness, and compliments him on his good looks and healthful appearance; the sage shakes his head approvingly, and beholds his old pupil's caperings with gentle complacency. It is a pretty little bit of by-play. Goldsmith then begins to strut about, bragging jocularly of his new dress, which he calls upon the company to survey with admiration.

"Come, come," says Garrick, "talk no more of that. You are perhaps the worst—eh, eh!" Goldsmith eagerly attempts to interrupt him, but Garrick goes on, laughing ironically, "Nay, you will always look like a gentleman; but I'm talking of being well or ill drest."—"Well, let me tell you," says Goldsmith, "when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat, he said, 'Sir, I have a favour to beg of you. When anybody asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, in Water-lane."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour."

Do men of genius ever toy like that now? Johnson himself once said, "I love the light parts of a solid character;" and so do we. There is no reason surely why genius should always be on the rack, why it should always speak upon oath, why it should never come abroad except in full dress, why it should not frisk and gambol and carouse occasionally, like the big humanity it is here to represent.

After dinner, the conversation turned upon Pope. Johnson repeated the concluding lines of the "Dunciad" in his own forcible mellifluous way, which, according to Mrs. Thrale, defied all power of description. While he was loudly praising the lines, one of the company ventured to say, "Too fine for such a poem:—a poem on what?"—Johnson (with a disdainful look): "Why, on dunces. It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, Sir, hadst thou lived in those days! It is not worth while being a dunce now, when there are no wits."

Johnson said that he considered the description of the temple in Congreve's "Mourning Bride" the finest poetical passage he had ever read; he recollected none in Shakespeare equal to it:—

"How reverend is the face of this tall pile,
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads
To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof,
By its own weight made steadfast and immovable,
Looking tranquillity!"

168 JOHNSON VERSUS SHAKESPEARE.

"But," he added, "this is not comparing Congreve on the whole with Shakespeare on the whole; but only maintaining that Congreve has one finer passage than any that can be found in Shakespeare. Sir, a man may have no more than ten guineas in the world, but he may have those ten guineas in one piece; and so may have a finer piece than a man who has ten thousand pounds: but then he has only one ten-guinea piece."

One of the company suggested Shakespeare's description of Dover Cliff, in King Lear, as being finer.

JOHNSON: "No, Sir; it should be all precipice, all vacuum. The crows impede your fall. The diminished appearance of the boat, and other circumstances, are all very good description; but do not impress the mind at once with the horrible idea of immense height. The impression is divided; you pass on by computation, from one stage of the tremendous space to another. Had the girl in the 'Mourning Bride' said she could not cast her shoe to the top of one of the pillars in the temple, it would not have aided the idea, but weakened it."

We are sorely tempted to criticise the critic here; but must forbear, only remarking that we believe Shakespeare's description of Dover Cliff to be all that he meant it to be; not a mere vague awe-inspiring idea of great height, but this combined with a most striking picture of it. In Shakespeare, the picture and the idea go grandly together; in Congreve, there is only the idea—no clear picture. Johnson made the same mistake when he said, later in the evening, that "in the description of night in 'Macbeth' the beetle and the bat detract from the general idea of darkness-inspissated gloom." It is exactly the reverse; the beetle and the bat leave the general idea of darkness untouched, while they give a powerfully impressive picture of the gloom; a double effect is thus produced, and not, as Johnson thought, a divided one. This is the style in which he criticises Shakespeare throughout his whole edition; and such criticism, in such a case, is worse than useless.

October 19th: Johnson's House.

Boswell mentioned that he had seen several convicts executed the other day, and that none of them seemed to be in any way concerned about their fate.

JOHNSON: "Most of them, Sir, have never thought at all."

Boswell: "But is not the fear of death natural to man?"

JOHNSON: " So much so, Sir, that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it."

Sympathy with the distresses of others happened to be spoken of.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, there is much noise made about it, but it is greatly exaggerated. No, Sir, we have a certain degree of feeling to prompt us to do good; more than that, Providence does not intend. It would be misery to no purpose." -Boswell: "But suppose now, Sir, that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged."-JOHNSON: "I should do what I could to bail him, and give him any other assistance; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer."—Boswell: Would you eat your dinner that day, Sir?"—JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, and eat it as if he were eating with me. Why, there's Baretti, who is to be tried for his life to-morrow; friends have risen up for him on every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plumpudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind."-Boswell: "I dined with Foote lately, and he showed me a letter from Tom Davies, which began with the assurance that he (Mr. Davies) had not been able to sleep because of his concern for 'this sad affair of Baretti,' and ended with recommending to Foote an industrious young man who kept a pickle-shop." -- Johnson: "Ay, Sir, here you have a specimen of human sympathy: a friend hanged, and a cucumber pickled. We know not whether Baretti or the pickle-man has kept Davies from sleep: nor does he know himself. And as to his not sleeping, Sir, Tom Davies is a very great man; Tom has been upon the stage, and knows how to do those things: I have

not been upon the stage, and cannot do those things."—Bos-WELL: "I have often blamed myself, Sir, for not feeling for others as sensibly as many say they do."—Johnson: "Sir, don't be duped by them any more. You will find these very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They pay you by feeling."

Boswell: "Foote has a great deal of humour."-Johnson: "Yes, Sir."—Boswell: "He has a singular talent of exhibiting character."—Johnson: "Sir, it is not a talent—it is a vice; it is what others abstain from. It is not comedy, which exhibits the character of a species, as that of a miser gathered from many misers: it is farce, which exhibits individuals." - Boswell: "Did not he think of exhibiting you, Sir?"—JOHNSON: "Sir, fear restrained him; he knew I would have broken his bones. I would have saved him the trouble of cutting off a leg; I would not have left him a leg to cut off."—Boswell: "Pray, Sir, is not Foote an infidel?"--Johnson: "I do not know, Sir, that the fellow is an infidel; but if he be an infidel, he is an infidel as a dog is an infidel; that is to say, he has never thought upon the subject."—Boswell: "I suppose, Sir, he has thought superficially, and seized the first notions which occurred to his mind."-John-SON: "Why then, Sir, still he is like a dog, that snatches the piece next him. Did you never observe that dogs have not the power of comparing? A dog will take a small bit of meat as readily as a large, when both are before him."

October 26th: JOHNSON'S House.

Boswell rashly introduced the unwelcome subject of death, and tried to maintain that the fear of it might be got over. He told the Doctor that David Hume had said to him that he was no more uneasy to think he should not be after death than that he had not been before he began to exist.

JOHNSON: "Sir, if he really thinks so, his perceptions are disturbed; he is mad. If he does not think so, he lies. He may tell you he holds his finger in the flame of a candle, without feeling pain; would you believe him? When he dies, he at least gives

up all he has."—Boswell: "Foote, Sir, told me, that when he was very ill he was not afraid to die."—Johnson: "It is not true, Sir. Hold a pistol to Foote's breast, or to Hume's breast, and threaten to kill them, and you'll see how they behave."—Boswell: "But may we not fortify our minds for the approach of death?" Johnson [in a rage]: "No, Sir, let it alone. It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. The act of dying is not of importance, it lasts so short a time. A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine."

Boswell attempted to continue the conversation, though he might have been warned off that subject by the Doctor's last passionate utterance. "Give us no more of this," cried Johnson, in great wrath; and he gave his importunate visitor to understand that he might take his departure as soon as he pleased. When Boswell was leaving the room Johnson shouted after him, "Don't let us meet to-morrow."

The guilty man did, however, call upon the offended Doctor next day, having first smoothed the way thither by sending him a very humble letter of apology. He was received graciously, and pardoned freely. Boswell takes this opportunity of remarking (and the remark is a good one) that "though Johnson might be charged with bad humour at times he was always a good-natured man." Sir Joshua Reynolds, also, used to observe that, if our Author had been rude to any one, he always took the first opportunity of begging his pardon,—by drinking to him, or directing his discourse specially to him, or in some other little delicate way.

While the Doctor was musing over the fire one evening in Thrale's drawing-room, a young gentleman suddenly, and, as Johnson seems to have fancied, somewhat disrespectfully, called to him: "Mr. Johnson, would you advise me to marry?"—Johnson [angrily]: "Sir, I would advise no man to marry who is not likely to propagate understanding." He then left the room, but, returning almost immediately, sat down and discoursed so eloquently and good-humouredly upon "marriage" that the whole company, young gentleman included, forgave the former rudeness—perceiving that the Doctor was apologizing in his own way.

Johnson could say "Peccavi," and say it sincerely too; but he

172 JOHNSON'S WAY OF APOLOGIZING.

would not put his mouth in the dust while he pronounced the word. He could seek forgiveness of his fellow-men, and seek it frankly; but he must ask it standing on his feet. He could beg a man's pardon; but only in a manly way. And he looked for no other sort of apology from those who had offended him. His disgust at intoxication, for instance, was well known by all his acquaintances. On one occasion, a friend of his appeared at a tavern, where he and some others were at supper, in a state a little beyond the allowed limit. A wag, thinking to provoke a very strong rebuke of the ill-advised gentleman, asked Johnson a few days afterwards, "Well, Sir, what did your friend say to you as an apology for being in such a situation?" —"Sir, he said all that a man should say: he said he was sorry for it."

So that little flash of anger which poor Boswell struck out has, after all, only brought to light one more admirable trait in the character of Johnson the Man.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEGRO FRANCIS AT SCHOOL—PROPOSAL TO ENTER PARLIAMENT—
MEDITATIONS ON EARLY RISING.

(1769—1771.)

Boswell again called upon the Doctor on the morning of the tenth of November, the day on which he was to leave for Scotland—for matrimonial purposes. The prospect of connubial felicity had made the expectant husband voluble; he therefore took courage to recite to the sage a little love-song which he had himself composed and which Dibdin was to set to music:—

"A MATRIMONIAL THOUGHT.

"In the blythe days of honeymoon,
With Kate's allurements smitten,
I loved her late, I loved her soon,
And call'd her dearest kitten.

"But now my kitten's grown a cat, And cross like other wives, Oh! by my soul, my honest Mat, I fear she has nine lives."

JOHNSON: "It is very well, Sir, but you should not swear." Whereupon the obnoxious "Oh! by my soul," was changed on the instant to "Alas! alas!"

"TO MR. FRANCIS BARBER, AT MRS. CLAPP'S, BISHOP STORTFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE.

" London, Sept. 25, 1770.

"DEAR FRANCIS,

"I am at last sat down to write to you, and should very much blame myself for having neglected you so long, if I did not impute that and many other failings to want of health. I hope not to be so long silent again. I am very well satisfied with your progress, if you can really perform the exercises which you are set; and I hope Mr. Ellis does not suffer you to impose on him or on yourself.

- "Make my compliments to Mr. Ellis, and to Mrs. Clapp, and Mr. Smith.
- "Let me know what English books you read for your entertainment. You can never be wise unless you love reading.
- "Do not imagine that I shall forget or forsake you; for if, when I examine you, I find that you have not lost your time, you shall want no encouragement from

"Yours affectionately,
"Sam. Johnson."

"TO THE SAME.

" December 7, 1770.

"DEAR FRANCIS,

"I hope you mind your business. I design you shall stay with Mrs. Clapp these holidays. If you are invited out you may go, if Mr. Ellis gives leave. I have ordered you some clothes, which you will receive, I believe, next week. My compliments to Mrs. Clapp, and to Mr. Ellis, and Mr. Smith, &c.

"I am, your affectionate,

"Sam. Johnson."

These two little letters give us a far deeper insight into the real Johnson than his political pamphlet, "The False Alarm," which was published the same year, and created a great sensation in that noisy world where politics reign supreme.

In 1771, he published another political pamphlet, entitled "Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands."

These two pamphlets had been on the government side, and very warmly on that side. It therefore occurred to a friend of Johnson's, also a supporter of the government, and a Member of Parliament to boot, that our Author might be a valuable acquisition to the House of Commons, could he by any means find

entrance there. On the strength of this conviction the gentleman wrote to one of the Secretaries of the Treasury the following letter:—

"New Strat, March 30, 1771.

"SIR,

"You will easily recollect, when I had the honour of waiting upon you some time ago, I took the liberty to observe to you, that Dr. Johnson would make an excellent figure in the House of Commons, and heartily wished he had a seat there. My reasons are briefly these:

"I know his perfect good affection to his Majesty and his government, which I am certain he wishes to support by every means in his power.

"He possesses a great share of manly, nervous, and ready eloquence; is quick in discerning the strength and weakness of an argument; can express himself with clearness and precision, and fears the face of no man alive.

"His known character, as a man of extraordinary sense and unimpeached virtue, would secure him the attention of the House, and could not fail to give him a proper weight there.

"He is capable of the greatest application, and can undergo any degree of labour, where he sees it necessary, and where his heart and affections are strongly engaged. His Majesty's ministers might therefore securely depend on his doing, upon every proper occasion, the utmost that could be expected from him. They would find him ready to vindicate such measures as tended to promote the stability of government, and resolute and steady in carrying them into execution. Nor is anything to be apprehended from the supposed impetuosity of his temper. To the friends of the king you will find him a lamb, to his enemies a lion.

"For these reasons I humbly apprehend that he would be a very able and useful member. And I will venture to say, the employment would not be disagreeable to him; and knowing, as I do, his strong affection to the king, his ability to serve him in that capacity, and the extreme ardour with which I am convinced he would engage in that service, I must repeat that I wish most heartily to see him in the House.

176 FAILURE NOT TO BE REGRETTED.

"If you think this worthy of attention, you will be pleased to take a convenient opportunity of mentioning it to Lord North. If his lordship should happily approve of it, I shall have the satisfaction of having been, in some degree, the humble instrument of doing my country, in my opinion, a very essential service. I know your good nature, and your zeal for the public welfare, will plead my excuse for giving you this trouble.

"I am, with the greatest respect, Sir,

"Your most obedient and humble servant,

"WILLIAM STRAHAN."

Nothing came of this recommendation; and perhaps the world has no reason to regret that Johnson was not allowed an opportunity of "trying his hand" at speech-making in the British National Assembly. His triumphs at the Mitre Tavern, at Mr. Thrale's, at the Club, at his own house-wherever, in short, he went as a private man—are indisputable; but it is by no means certain that his talking powers would have stood him in as good stead in the House of Commons, where subjects were to be discussed and not men to be opposed, where steadiness of argument was wanted and not rapidity of debate, where he would have missed that friendly friction which generated half his happiest hits. and that universal deference which made him feel himself the intellectual king he really was. Johnson, with all his talking talents, might have been a very silent member of the House of Commons. His services there would not have lost him the spurs he had won elsewhere; but neither would they, in all probability, have obtained for him one pair more.

"BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, April 18, 1771.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I can now fully understand those intervals of silence in your correspondence with me, which have often given me anxiety and uneasiness; for although I am conscious that my veneration and love for Mr. Johnson have never in the least abated, yet I have deferred for almost a year and a half to write to him."

In the subsequent part of this letter the writer gave an account of his comfortable life as a married man and a lawyer in practice at the Scotch bar; invited the Doctor to Scotland, and promised to attend him to the Highlands and Hebrides.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" London, June 20, 1771.

"DEAR SIR,

"If you are now able to comprehend that I might neglect to write without diminution of affection, you have taught me, likewise, how that neglect may be uneasily felt without resentment. I wished for your letter a long time, and when it came, it amply recompensed the delay. I never was so much pleased as now with your account of yourself; and sincerely hope, that between public business, improving studies, and domestic pleasures, neither melancholy nor caprice will find any place for entrance. Whatever philosophy may determine of material nature, it is certainly true of intellectual nature, that it abhors a vacuum: our minds cannot be empty; and evil will break in upon them, if they are not preoccupied by good. My dear sir, mind your studies, mind your business, make your lady happy, and be a good Christian. After this,

' tristitiam et metus Trades protervis in mare Creticum Portare ventis,'

"If we perform our duty we shall be safe and steady, 'Sive per,' &c., whether we climb the Highlands, or are tossed among the Hebrides; and I hope the time will come when we may try our powers both with cliffs and water. I see but little of Lord Elibank, I know not why; perhaps by my own fault. I am this day going into Staffordshire and Derbyshire for six weeks.

"I am, dear sir,

"Your most affectionate and most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, IN LEICESTER FIELDS.

"Ashbourne, in Derbyshire, July 17, 1771.

"DEAR SIR,

"When I came to Lichfield, I found that my portrait had been much visited, and much admired. Every man has a lurking wish to appear considerable in his native place; and I was pleased with the dignity conferred by such a testimony of your regard.

"Be pleased, therefore,

"To accept the thanks of, Sir,
"Your most obliged and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Compliments to Miss Reynolds."

"TO DR. JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, July 27, 1771.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"The bearer of this, Mr. Beattie, professor of moral philosophy at Aberdeen, is desirous of being introduced to your acquaintance. His genius and learning, and labours in the service of virtue and religion, render him very worthy of it: and as he has a high esteem of your character, I hope you will give him a favourable reception.

"I ever am, &c.,
"JAMES BOSWELL."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

" August 29, 1771.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am lately returned from Staffordshire and Derbyshire. The last letter mentions two others which you have written to me since you received my pamphlet. Of these two I never had but one, in which you mentioned a design of visiting Scotland, and by consequence, put my journey to Langton out of my thoughts. My summer wanderings are now over, and I am engaging in a very great work, the revision of my Dictionary; from which I know not, at present, how to get loose.

"If you have observed, or been told, any errors or omissions, you will do me a great favour by letting me know them.

"Lady Rothes, I find, has disappointed you and herself. Ladies will have these tricks. The Queen and Mrs. Thrale, both ladies of experience, yet both missed their reckoning this summer. I hope a few months will recompense your uneasiness.

"Please to tell Lady Rothes how highly I value the honour of her invitation, which it is my purpose to obey as soon as I have disengaged myself. In the meantime, I shall hope to hear often of her ladyship, and every day better news and better, till I hear that you have both the happiness, which to both is very sincerely wished by, Sir,

"Your most affectionate

"And most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Looking into the Doctor's "Prayers and Meditations" of this year, we find him taking himself solemnly to task for not rising earlier in the mornings; yet, in justice to his own state, he is constrained to add: "One great hindrance is want of rest; my nocturnal complaints grow less troublesome towards morning: and I am tempted to repair the deficiencies of the night." He appears to have been constitutionally unable to get up early; the following words were found written on a scrap of paper which he seems to have used in preparing his Dictionary: "I do not remember that, since I left Oxford, I ever rose early by mere choice, but once or twice at Edial, and two or three times for 'The Rambler.'" But he never said to himself, this weakness is constitutional and therefore unconquerable: he fought against it all his life-with poor success, no doubt, but with much moral suggestiveness to us who now know his struggles. "The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak,"

CHAPTER XX.

CONVERSATIONS—JOHNSON ON GOLDSMITH—SILENT SORROWS.

(1772.)

In March, 1772, Boswell again arrived in London. From the conversations he collected during this visit, we select the following as representative specimens.

Johnson spoke of St. Kilda, the remotest of the Hebrides.

Boswell: "I am thinking of buying it."—Johnson: "Pray do, Sir. We will go and pass a winter amid the blasts there. We shall have fine fish, and we will take some dried tongues with us, and some books. We will have a strong-built vessel, and some Orkney men to navigate her. We must build a tolerable house; but we may carry with us a wooden house ready-made, and requiring nothing but to be put up. Consider, Sir, by buying St. Kilda, you may keep the people from falling into worse hands. We must give them a clergyman, and he shall be one of Beattie's choosing. He shall be educated at Marischal College. I'll be your Lord Chancellor, or what you please."—Boswell: "Are you serious, Sir, in advising me to buy St. Kilda?—for if you should advise me to go to Japan, I believe I should do it."—Johnson: "Why, yes, Sir, I am serious."—Boswell: "Why, then, I'll see what can be done."

They talked of mimicry, Boswell expressing his opinion that it was a very mean thing.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, it is making a very mean use of man's powers. But to be a good mimic requires great powers; great acuteness of observation, great retention of what is observed, and great pliancy of organs to represent what is observed. I remember a lady of quality in this town, Lady———, who was a won-

derful mimic, and used to make me laugh immoderately. I have heard she is now gone mad."-Boswell: "It is amazing how a mimic can not only give you the gestures and voice of a person whom he represents; but even what a person would say on any particular subject."-Johnson: "Why, Sir, you are to consider that the manner and some particular phrases of a person do much to impress you with an idea of him, and you are not sure that he would say what the mimic says in his character."—Boswell: "I don't think Foote a good mimic, Sir."-JOHNSON: "No, Sir, his imitations are not like. He gives you something different from himself, but not the character which he means to assume. goes out of himself, without going into other people. He cannot take off any person unless he is strongly marked, such as George Faulkner. He is like a painter who can draw the portrait of a man who has a wen upon his face, and who therefore is easily known. If a man hops upon one leg, Foote can hop upon one leg. But he has not nice discrimination. Foote is, however, very entertaining with a kind of conversation between wit and buffoonery."

Boswell: "It may be of use, Sir, to have a Dictionary to ascertain pronunciation."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, my Dictionary shows you the accent of words, if you can but remember them."-Boswell: "But, Sir, we want marks to ascertain the pronunciation of the vowels. Sheridan, I believe, has finished such a work."-JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, consider how much easier it is to learn a language by the ear, than by any marks. Sheridan's Dictionary may do very well; but you cannot always carry it about with you: and, when you want the word, you have not the Dictionary. It is like a man who has a sword that will not draw. is an admirable sword, to be sure; but while your enemy is cutting your throat, you are unable to use it. Besides, Sir, what entitles Sheridan to fix the pronunciation of English? He has, in the first place, the disadvantage of being an Irishman; and if he says he will fix it after the example of the best company, why, they differ among themselves. I remember an instance: when I published the plan for my Dictionary, Lord Chesterfield told me that the word great should be pronounced so as to rhyme to state; and Sir William Yonge sent me word that it should be pronounced so as to rhyme to seat, and that none but an Irishman would pronounce it grait. Now, here were two men of the highest rank, the one the best speaker in the House of Lords, the other the best speaker in the House of Commons, differing entirely."

Elwal the heretic was referred to:-

JOHNSON: "Sir, Mr. Elwal was, I think, an ironmonger at Wolverhampton; and he had a mind to make himself famous, by being the founder of a new sect, which he wished much should be called Elwallians. He held, that everything in the Old Testament that was not typical, was to be of perpetual observance: and so he wore a riband in the plaits of his coat, and he also wore a I remember I had the honour of dining in company with Mr. Elwal. There was one Barter, a miller, who wrote against him: and you had the controversy between Mr. Elwal and Mr. Barter. To try to make himself distinguished, he wrote a letter to King George the Second, challenging him to dispute with him, in which he said, 'George, if you be afraid to come by yourself, to dispute with a poor old man, you may bring a thousand of your black-guards with you; and if you should still be afraid, you may bring a thousand of your red-guards.' The letter had something of the impudence of Junius to our present King. But the men of Wolverhampton were not so inflammable as the Common Council of London; so Mr. Elwal failed in his scheme of making himself a man of great consequence."

Talking of the proper use of riches:-

JOHNSON: "If I were a man of a great estate, I would drive all the rascals whom I did not like out of the county at an election."

Boswell asked the Doctor how far he thought wealth ought to be expended on hospitality:—

JOHNSON: "You are to consider that ancient hospitality, of which we hear so much, was in an uncommercial country, when men, being idle, were glad to be entertained at rich men's tables. But in a commercial country, a busy country, time becomes precious, and therefore hospitality is not so much valued. No doubt there is still room for a certain degree of it; and a man has a satisfaction in seeing his friends eating and drinking around him. But promiscuous hospitality is not the way to gain real influence. You must help some people at table before others; you must ask some people how they like their wine oftener than others. therefore offend more people than you please. You are like the French statesman, who said, when he granted a favour, 'J'ai fait dix mécontents et un ingrat.' Besides, Sir, being entertained ever so well at a man's table, impresses no lasting regard or esteem. No, Sir, the way to make sure of power and influence is, by lending money confidentially to your neighbours at a small interest, or perhaps at no interest at all, and having their bonds in your possession."-Boswell: "May not a man, Sir, employ his riches to advantage in educating young men of merit?"-John-SON: "Yes, Sir, if they fall in your way; but if it be understood that you patronise young men of merit, you will be harassed with solicitations. You will have numbers forced upon you, who have no merit; some will force them upon you from mistaken partiality; and some from downright interested motives, without scruple; and you will be disgraced."

JOHNSON: "Were I a rich man I would propagate all kinds of trees that will grow in the open air. A greenhouse is childish. I would introduce foreign animals into the country: for instance, the reindeer."

But if even a greenhouse is childish, what shall express the Doctor's contempt for some other fashionable garden-toys? A lady once showed him a curious grotto of her own construction, and asked, winningly, "Wouldn't it be a nice cool habitation for summer?"—"No doubt it would, madam—for a toad!"

Fielding being mentioned, Johnson exclaimed, "He was a blockhead;" and then added, by way of explanation, "What I mean by his being a blockhead is, that he was a barren rascal."—
BOSWELL: "Will you not allow, Sir, that he draws very natural pictures of human life?"—Johnson: "Why, Sir, it is of very low

life. Richardson used to say that, had he not known who Fielding was, he should have believed he was an ostler. Sir, there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's, than in all 'Tom Jones.' I, indeed, never read 'Joseph Andrews.'— Honourable Thomas Erskine: "Surely, Sir, Richardson is very tedious."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment."

The question was started one evening, whether people who differed on some essential point could live in friendship together. Johnson said they might. Goldsmith said they could not, as they had not the idem velle atque idem nolle—the same likings and the same aversions.-Johnson: "Why, Sir, you must shun the subject as to which you disagree. For instance, I can live very well with Burke; I love his knowledge, his genius, his diffusion, and affluence of conversation; but I would not talk to him of the Rockingham party."—Goldsmith: "But, Sir, when people live together who have something as to which they disagree, and which they want to shun, they will be in the situation mentioned in the story of Bluebeard, 'You may look into all the chambers but one.' But we should have the greatest inclination to look into that chamber, to talk of that subject."—Johnson (with a loud voice): "Sir, I am not saying that you could live in friendship with a man from whom you differ as to some point: I am only saying that I could do it."

This seems to us, we must confess, a case in which Johnson, his pistol having missed fire, tried to knock Goldsmith down with the butt-end of it.

Boswell talked of the recent expulsion of six Methodist students from the University of Oxford for persisting in publicly praying and preaching.

JOHNSON: "Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at an University, who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach? Where is religion to be learnt

but at an University? Sir, they were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows."—Boswell: "But was it not hard, Sir, to expel them, for I am told they were good beings?"—Johnson: "I believe they might be good beings, but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field, but we turn her out of a garden."

Boswell defended drinking on the ground of the well-known maxim in vino veritas.

Johnson: "Why, Sir, that may be an argument for drinking, if you suppose men in general to be liars. But, Sir, I would not keep company with a fellow who lies as long as he is sober, and whom you must make drunk before you can get a word of truth out of him."

A gentleman, attempting to defend hard drinking, said: "You know, Sir, drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?"—Johnson: "Yes, Sir, if he sat next you." A magnificent retort.

Speaking of Goldsmith:-

JOHNSON: "Sir, he is so much afraid of being unnoticed, that he often talks merely lest you should forget that he is in the company."—Boswell: "Yes, he stands forward."—Johnson: "True, Sir; but if a man is to stand forward, he should wish to do it not in an awkward posture, not in rags, not so as that he shall only be exposed to ridicule."—Boswell: "For my part, I like very well to hear honest Goldsmith talk away carelessly."—Johnson: "Why, yes, Sir, but he should not like to hear himself."

Speaking of Goldsmith on another evening:-

JOHNSON: "The misfortune of Goldsmith in conversation is this: he goes on without knowing how he is to get off. His genius is great, but his knowledge is small. As they say of a generous man, it is a pity he is not rich, we may say of Goldsmith, it is a pity he is not knowing. He would not keep his knowledge to himself."

On another occasion, Boswell remarked that Goldsmith had a great deal of gold in his cabinet, but, not content with that, was always taking out his purse.—Johnson: "Yes, Sir, and that so often an empty purse!"

The Doctor, who himself made talking a matter of conscience, and always strove to do his best in this kind, could not easily pardon Goldsmith for the rambling, rattling, sometimes nonsensical, often fantastical, occasionally vain, way in which he chose to converse. But that was his whole objection: he loved the man.

A learned gentleman, in the course of conversation one evening, wishing to inform the company that the counsel upon the circuit at Shrewsbury had been much bitten by fleas, spent about seven or eight minutes in giving a circumstantial account of the marvel. Johnson had listened with the utmost impatience, and at last burst out (playfully though): "It is a pity, Sir, that you have not seen a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time, that a lion must have served you a twelvemonth."

Boswell spoke of a friend of his who had resided long in Spain, and was unwilling to return to Britain.

JOHNSON: "Sir, he is attached to some woman."—Boswell: "I rather believe, Sir, it is the fine climate which keeps him there."—Johnson: "Nay, Sir, how can you talk so? What is climate to happiness? Place me in the heart of Asia, should I not be exiled? What proportion does climate bear to the complex system of human life? You may advise me to go to live at Bologna to eat sausages. The sausages there are the best in the world: they lose much by being carried."

Speaking of sounds on one occasion :-

General Paoli said there was no beauty in a simple sound, but only in a harmonious composition of sounds. Boswell presumed to differ from this opinion, and instanced the soft and sweet sound of a fine female voice.—Johnson: "No, Sir, if a serpent or a toad uttered it, you would think it ugly."—Boswell: "So you would think, Sir, were a beautiful tune to be uttered by one of those animals."—Johnson: "No, Sir, it would be admired.

We have seen fine fiddlers whom we liked as little as toads" (laughing).

Between Walpole and Pitt Johnson distinguished thus:—
"Walpole was a minister given by the king to the people: Pitt
was a minister given by the people to the king—as an adjunct."

Boswell repeated a sentence from a speech he had heard in an appeal case before the House of Lords: "My lords, severity is not the way to govern either boys or men." "Nay," said Johnson, "it is the way to govern them. I know not whether it be the way to mend them."

The abilities of Lord Mansfield were spoken of with admiration; but Johnson would not allow Scotland to have the credit of him, since England had given him his education. "Much," said he, "may be made of a Scotchman, if he be caught young."

During a visit to the Pantheon, Boswell said, "There is not half a guinea's worth of pleasure in seeing this place."—Johnson: "But, Sir, there is half a guinea's worth of inferiority to other people in not having seen it."—Boswell: "I doubt, Sir, whether there are many happy people here."—Johnson: "Yes, Sir, there are many happy people here. There are many people here who are watching hundreds, and who think hundreds are watching them."

Sir Adam Ferguson expressed his opinion that luxury corrupts a people, and destroys the spirit of liberty.

JOHNSON: "Sir, that is all visionary. I would not give half a guinea to live under one form of government rather than another. It is of no moment to the happiness of an individual. Sir, the danger of the abuse of power is nothing to a private man. What Frenchman is prevented from passing his life as he pleases?"—SIR ADAM: "But, Sir, in the British Constitution it is surely of importance to keep up a spirit in the people, so as to preserve a balance against the crown."—JOHNSON: "Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig. Why all this childish jealousy of the power of the

crown? The crown has not power enough. When I say that all governments are alike, I consider that in no government can power be abused long. Mankind will not bear it. If a sovereign oppresses his people to a great degree, they will rise and cut off his head. There is a remedy in human nature against tyranny, that will keep us safe under every form of government. Had not the people of France thought themselves honoured in sharing the brilliant actions of Louis XIV., they would not have endured him; and we may say the same of the King of Prussia's people."—Sir Adam introduced the ancient Greeks and Romans.—Johnson: "Sir, the mass of both of them were barbarians. The mass of every people must be barbarous where there is no printing, and consequently knowledge is not generally diffused. Knowledge is diffused among our people by the newspapers."—Sir Adam mentioned the orators, poets, and artists of Greece.—Johnson: "Sir, I am talking of the mass of the people. We see even what the boasted Athenians were. The little effect which Demosthenes' orations had upon them shows that they were barbarians."

But far below this broad and strong current of public talk, in which everything that floated looked brilliant, and self-confident, and victorious, there had been running all the while a dark and narrow stream of private communing with his own heart, bearing on its surface nothing but doubts and difficulties, fears and self-upbraidings. Let us, in closing this chapter, look for one moment into that black and troubled flood: "My mind is unsettled and my memory confused. I have of late turned my thoughts, with a very useless earnestness, upon past incidents. I have yet got no command over my thoughts; an unpleasing incident is almost certain to hinder my rest."

Of all this sore distress the world knew nothing: one or two of his very closest friends may have occasionally divined something of it; but, on the whole, he mastered his sorrows well. A grand silent man! "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy."

CHAPTER XXI.

BOSWELL DINES WITH THE DOCTOR AT HOME—CONVERSATIONS—GOLDSMITH—DE PROFUNDIS.

(1773.)

To those who find all life uninteresting which is not crowded with incidents, ever new, and each more striking than the last, Johnson's life must seem an uneventful one indeed. Lying in bed till mid-day, dining at some friend's house or at a tavern, taking two or three teas in the evening, and often sitting up till four o'clock next morning: such has been for many years our Author's London existence—a monotony only varied hitherto by an occasional trip to Oxford or Lichfield, and by more frequent visits to Mr. Thrale's villa at Streatham, on the Sussex Downs. What, then, is the charm of this man's life? The answer must always be: Johnson's character—his marked individuality, hisstrong personality, himself. In a world in which the tendency is for everybody to become like everybody else, and for nobody to remain himself for a very long time, the mere existence of a man so original as Samuel Johnson is a notable phenomenon. entire uniqueness appears in every little thing the Doctor does, and in every big thing he says. He was emphatically a great man. and, it need scarcely be added, the finest talker that ever opened But one who spoke so much, and so well, may be safely left now to speak for himself.

Johnson's only publication in 1773 was a new edition of his Dictionary, with additions and corrections. His Shakespeare, also, was republished this year by Stephens, whose labours may be thought by some to have done credit to himself, though they nave certainly done little honour to Shakespeare.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. WHITE.

"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, "March 4, 1773.

"DEAR SIR,

"Your kindness for your friends accompanies you across the Atlantic. It was long since observed by Horace, that no ship could leave care behind: you have been attended in your voyage by other powers,—by benevolence and constancy; and I hope care did not often show her face in their company.

"I received the copy of 'Rasselas.' The impression is not magnificent, but it flatters an author, because the printer seems to have expected that it would be scattered among the people. The little book has been well received, and is translated into Italian, French, German, and Dutch. It has now one honour more by an American edition.

"I know not that much has happened since your departure that can engage your curiosity. Of all public transactions the whole world is now informed by the newspapers. Opposition seems to despond; and the dissenters, though they have taken advantage of unsettled times, and a government much enfeebled, seem not likely to gain any immunities.

"Dr. Goldsmith has a new comedy in rehearsal at Coventgarden, to which the manager predicts ill-success. I hope he will be mistaken. I think it deserves a very kind reception.

"I shall soon publish a new edition of my large Dictionary: I have been persuaded to revise it, and have mended some faults, but added little to its usefulness.

"No book has been published since your departure, of which much notice is taken. Faction only fills the town with pamphlets, and greater subjects are forgotten in the noise of discord.

"Thus have I written, only to tell you how little I have to tell. Of myself I can only add that, having been afflicted many weeks with a very troublesome cough, I am now recovered.

"I take the liberty which you give me of troubling you with a

letter, of which you will be pleased to fill up the direction. I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant, "Sam. Johnson."

In April, Boswell is once more in London, and at his old work there. He found the whole city busy talking of our friend Goldsmith, and a letter of his in the *London Chronicle*. A long and abusive epistle had appeared in the *London Packet* some time before, and Goldsmith had taken his revenge by first beating the publisher of the offensive article, and then writing to the other paper a vindication of the assault.

JOHNSON [to Mrs. Williams]: "Well, Dr. Goldsmith's manifesto has got into your paper."

Boswell gave the Doctor to understand that he suspected he had written it.

Johnson: "Sir, Dr. Goldsmith would no more have asked me to write such a thing as that for him than he would have asked me to feed him with a spoon, or to do anything else that denoted his imbecility. I as much believe that he wrote it as if I had seen him do it. Sir, had he shown it to any one friend, he would not have been allowed to publish it. He has, indeed, done it very well; but it is a foolish thing well done. I suppose he has been so much elated with the success of his new comedy that he has thought everything that concerned him must be of importance to the public."—Boswell: "I fancy, Sir, this is the first time that he has been engaged in such an adventure."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, I believe it is the first time he has beat; he may have been beaten before. This, Sir, is a new plume to him."

One of the days of this visit to London Boswell has marked for us with a great white stone; for on it he was asked to dine with the Doctor at home—an altogether exceptional, almost singular honour. It was a Sunday; and, says Johnson, when giving the invitation, "I generally have a meat-pie on Sunday: it is baked at a public oven, which is very properly allowed, because one man can attend it; and thus the advantage is obtained of not keeping servants from church to dress dinners."

Foote, the actor, used jokingly to ask, in allusion to the negro Francis, "What did you have for dinner—black broth?" But the truth is, the dinner was quite good enough to satisfy the most epicurean taste: soup, a boiled leg of lamb and spinach, a vealpie, and a rice-pudding: in fact, it was a dinner to ask a man to.

The conversations of this period we shall give without specifying the occasions.

Chesterfield being mentioned, the Doctor remarked that almost all his witty sayings were puns. He was forced to admit, however, the cleverness of the following saying: "Lord Tyrawley and I have been dead these two years, but we don't choose to have it known."

Speaking of Burnet's "History of My Own Times:"-

JOHNSON: "It is very entertaining. The style, indeed, is mere chit-chat. I do not believe that Burnet intentionally lied; but he was so much prejudiced, that he took no pains to find out the truth. He was like a man who resolves to regulate his time by a certain watch; but he will not inquire whether the watch is right or not."

Johnson praised Goldsmith.

Boswell: "But, Sir, he is much indebted to you for his getting so high in public estimation."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, he has, perhaps, got sooner to it by his intimacy with me."

Mark the fairness of that reply: this is a man who will always do another justice, and more. He condemns strongly where he thinks he sees anything wrong; but his praise is always warm and generous, and sure to come, sooner or later.

Garrick was attacked by some one on the ground of his vanity.

Johnson: "No wonder, Sir, that he is vain; a man who is perpetually flattered in every mode that can be conceived. So many bellows have blown the fire, that one wonders he has not by this time become a cinder."—Boswell: "And such bellows, oo. Lord Mansfield with his cheeks like to burst:

Lord Chatham like an Æolus. I have read such notes from them to him as were enough to turn his head."—JOHNSON: "True. When he whom everybody else flatters, flatters me, I then am truly happy."—MRS. THRALE: "The sentiment is in Congreve, I think."—JOHNSON: "Yes, Madam, in 'The Way of the World'":—

'If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart which others bleed for, bleed for me.'"

Goldsmith maintained that luxury was making our race degenerate.

JOHNSON: "Sir, in the first place I doubt the fact. I believe there are as many tall men in England now, as ever there were. But, secondly, supposing the stature of our people to be diminished, that is not owing to luxury; for, Sir, consider to how very small a proportion of our people luxury can reach. Our soldiery, surely, are not luxurious, who live on sixpence a day; and the same remark will apply to almost all the other classes. Luxury, so far as it reaches the poor, will do good to the race of people; it will strengthen and multiply them. Sir, no nation was ever hurt by luxury; for, as I said before, it can reach but to a very I admit that the great increase of commerce and manufactures hurts the military spirit of a people; because it produces a competition for something else than martial honours—a competition for riches. It also hurts the bodies of the people: for you will observe, there is no man who works at any particular trade, but you may know him from his appearance to do so. One part or the other of his body being more used than the rest, he is in some degree deformed: but, Sir, that is not luxury. A tailor sits cross-legged: but that is not luxury."-Goldsmith: "Come, you're just going to the same place by another road."-Johnson: "Nay, Sir, I say that is not luxury. Let us take a walk from Charing-cross to White-chapel, through, I suppose, the greatest series of shops in the world, what is there in any of these shops (if you except gin-shops), that can do any human being any harm?"—Goldsmith: "Well, Sir, I'll accept your challenge. The very next shop to Northumberland-house is a pickle-shop."—

JOHNSON: "Well, Sir; do we not know that a maid can in one afternoon make pickles sufficient to serve a whole family for a year? nay, that five pickle-shops can serve all the kingdom? Besides, Sir, there is no harm done to anybody by the making of pickles or the eating of pickles."

Speaking of a gentleman who had committed suicide:-

Boswell: "Do you think, Sir, that all who commit suicide are mad?"-JOHNSON: "Sir, they are often not universally disordered in their intellects, but one passion presses so upon them, that they yield to it, and commit suicide, as a passionate man will stab another. I have often thought that after a man has taken the resolution to kill himself, it is not courage in him to do anything, however desperate, because he has nothing to fear."— GOLDSMITH: "I don't see that."—JOHNSON: "Nay, but my dear Sir, why should not you see what every one else sees?"—Gold-SMITH: "It is for fear of something that he has resolved to kill himself: and will not that timid disposition restrain him?"— JOHNSON: "It does not signify that the fear of something made him resolve; it is upon the state of his mind after the resolution is taken that I argue. Suppose a man, either from fear, or pride, or conscience, or whatever motive, has resolved to kill himself: when once the resolution is taken, he has nothing to fear. may then go and take the King of Prussia by the nose, at the head of his army. He cannot fear the rack, who is resolved to kill himself. When Eustace Budgel was walking down to the Thames, determined to drown himself, he might, if he pleased. without any apprehension of danger, have turned aside, and first set fire to St. James's Palace."

Boswell spoke of Allan Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd" as the best pastoral that had ever been written, and offered to teach Johnson to understand it.

JOHNSON: "No, Sir, I won't learn it; you shall retain your superiority by my not knowing it."

Mr. Elphinston, at whose house the Doctor was dining, talked of a new and greatly-admired book, and asked Johnson if he had read it.

JOHNSON: "I have looked into it."—ELPHINSTON: "What, have you not read it through?"—JOHNSON [tartly—not liking to be forced to confess that he almost never read a book through]: "No, Sir, do you read books through?"

Host or no host, our Doctor will not be worsted; Johnson thinks no more of snubbing a man at his own table than at the Mitre Tavern.

The Doctor declaimed against action in public speaking.

JOHNSON: "Action can have no effect upon reasonable minds. It may augment noise, but it never can enforce argument. If you speak to a dog, you use action: you hold up your hand thus, because he is a brute; and in proportion as men are removed from brutes, action will have the less influence upon them."—MRS. THRALE: "What then, Sir, becomes of Demosthenes' saying, 'Action, action, action!"—JOHNSON: "Demosthenes, Madam, spoke to an assembly of brutes; to a barbarous people."

Signor Martinelli had written a History of England in Italian—printed in London. A keen discussion arose on the advisability of his continuing the history to the present day.

GOLDSMITH: "To be sure he should."—JOHNSON: "No, Sir, he would give great offence. He would have to tell of almost all the living great what they do not wish told."—Goldsmith: "It may, perhaps, be necessary for a native to be more cautious; but a foreigner who comes among us without prejudice, may be considered as holding the place of a judge, and may speak his mind freely."-JOHNSON: "Sir, a foreigner, when he sends a work from the press, ought to be on his guard against catching the error and mistaken enthusiasm of the people among whom he happens to be."-GOLDSMITH: "Sir, he wants only to sell his history, and to tell truth; one an honest, the other a laudable motive."--JOHN-SON: "Sir, they are both laudable motives. It is laudable in a man to wish to live by his labours; but he should write so as he may live by them, not so as he may be knocked on the head. would advise him to be at Calais before he publishes his history of the present age. A foreigner who attaches himself to a political party in this country, is in the worst state that can be imagined: he is looked upon as a mere intermeddler. A native may do it from interest."—Boswell: "Or principle."—Goldsmith: "There are people who tell a hundred political lies every day, and are not hurt by it. Surely, then, one may tell truth with safety."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, in the first place, he who tells a hundred lies has disarmed the force of his lies. But besides, a man had rather have a hundred lies told of him, than one truth which he does not wish should be told."—Goldsmith: "For my part, I'd tell truth, and shame the devil."—Johnson: "Yes, Sir; but the devil will be angry. I wish to shame the devil as much as you do, but I should choose to be out of the reach of his claws."—Goldsmith: "His claws can do you no harm, when you have the shield of truth."

A certain gentleman was mentioned as being a very learned man, and especially an eminent Grecian.

JOHNSON: "I am not sure of that. His friends gave him out as such, but I know not who of his friends are able to judge of it."—Goldsmith: "He is what is much better; he is a worthy humane man."—Johnson: "Nay, Sir, that is not to the purpose of our argument: that will as much prove that he can play the fiddle as well as Giardini, as that he is an eminent Grecian."— GOLDSMITH: "The greatest musical performers have but small emoluments. Giardini, I am told, does not get above seven hundred a year."—Johnson: "That is indeed but little for a man to get, who does best that which so many endeavour to do. There is nothing, I think, in which the power of art is shown so much as in playing on the fiddle. In all other things we can do something at first. Any man will forge a bar of iron if you give him a hammer; not so well as a smith, but tolerably. A man will saw a piece of wood, and make a box, though a clumsy one; but give him a fiddle and a fiddlestick, and he can do nothing."

They talked of the King's going to see Goldsmith's new play, "She Stoops to Conquer."

GOLDSMITH: "I wish he would. Not that it would do me the

least good."—Johnson [laughing]: "Well, then, let us say it would do him good. No, Sir, this affectation will not pass: it is mighty idle. In such a state as ours who would not wish to please the chief magistrate?"—Goldsmith: "I do wish to please him. I remember a line in Dryden,

'And every poet is the monarch's friend.'

It ought to be reversed."—JOHNSON: "Nay, there are finer lines in Dryden on the subject:—

'For colleges on bounteous kings depend, And never rebel was to arts a friend.'"

Speaking of Goldsmith, on another occasion, the Doctor said: "Goldsmith should not be for ever attempting to shine in conversation: he has not temper for it, he is so much mortified when he fails. Sir, a game of jokes is composed partly of skill, partly of chance; a man may be beat at times by one who has not the tenth part of his wit. Now, Goldsmith's putting himself against another, is like a man laying a hundred to one who cannot spare the hundred. It is not worth a man's while. A man should not lay a hundred to one, unless he can easily spare it, though he has a hundred chances for him: he can get but a guinea, and he may lose a hundred. Goldsmith is in this state. When he contends, if he gets the better, it is a very little addition to a man of his literary reputation: if he does not get the better, he is miserably vexed."

Goldsmith's talk seems to have been too much of a hit-or-miss character to please Johnson; but we have seen already that he could sometimes beat the Doctor with his own weapons, and other instances might be given. For example: Goldsmith once remarked that he thought he could write a good fable, avoiding the common error of making the animals talk out of character. "For instance," said he, "the fable of the little fishes, who saw birds fly over their heads, and, envying them, petitioned Jupiter to be changed into birds. The skill," continued he, "consists in making them talk like little fishes." [The Doctor had been all this while sitting shaking his sides and laughing.] "Why, Dr.

Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales." That was a magnificent retort. And here is another: "Sir, [to Boswell, who was claiming for Johnson unquestioned literary supremacy] you are for making a monarchy of what should be a republic."

It was the Doctor's indiscriminate worshippers, far oftener than the Doctor himself, who occasioned any little explosions of temper on the part of Goldsmith. When the latter was talking, on one occasion, with great fluency and vivacity, a German who sat next him, perceiving that the Doctor was rolling himself about as if preparing to speak, suddenly stopped Goldsmith, exclaiming "Stop, stop, Toctor Shonson is going to say something." This sort of thing was insufferable, and it no doubt occurred very often. But those who wish to do Dr. Johnson himself justice—and all his readers ought to wish that-must never forget that they themselves must make up his full estimate of men and things by putting together the separate verdicts he pronounced at separate times. It is simply because it was against the grain of Johnson's whole nature to give either one-sided praise or indiscriminate blame that his deliverances seem so often at variance among themselves. As Sir Joshua Reynolds, an acute thinker, once said: "He was fond of discrimination, which he could not show without pointing out the bad as well as the good in every character; and as his friends were those whose characters he knew best, they afforded him the best opportunity for showing the acuteness of his judgment."

So it comes to pass that even the men he most loves—as in the case of Goldsmith—he tosses and tumbles about in rather a wild way, looking at them now from this side, now from that; yet, when we have got them fairly on their legs again, we are somehow made to feel that this rough handling has given us a knowledge of them which no more delicate and kid-glovey approaches could ever have afforded. Had Johnson's conscience been more lax and his veracity less decided, he might have pleased his friends better then, and saved his readers from some perplexity now. Let us always remember, however, that the easiest course was precisely that which he did not choose. "Falschood is so casy,

truth so difficult. The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin—the longer the claws and the larger the wings the better: but that marvellous facility which we mistook for genius is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real unexaggerated lion."

One little picture now, after all this talk. On Good Friday the Doctor and his friend Boswell went to the Church of St. Clement Danes, where Johnson had his seat. Boswell remarks: "I never shall forget the tremulous earnestness with which he pronounced the awful petition in the Litany, 'In the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us.'"

This, then, is the way in which Samuel Johnson tries to express his sense of the awful mystery of life, and the wonders and terrors of the mighty future. "Thoughts are so great—are they not? They seem to lie upon us like a deep flood." And, under the pressure of this overwhelming mass of spiritual waters, that struggling soul could but fill the forms of the ancient altar-service with a solemn cry for help to bear it all. The powers of the world to come assail us poor mortals in so many dreaded shapes, that it were cruelty not to allow us to fight them with whatever weapons come to hand; whether brought from the armoury of some remote and respectable "ology," or from that of some new and despised "ism."

CHAPTER XXII.

GARRICK A MEMBER OF THE CLUB—THE DOCTOR ON THE SCOTCH—DEBATE ON TOLERATION—EPISODE.

(1773.)

ABOUT this time, our friend Garrick was admitted a member of the Literary Club. Several erroneous accounts of the circumstances attending his entrance were actively circulated; owing their origin, most of them, to the prevailing passion for finding, or fabricating, *Johnsoniana*. One version of the story has it that Johnson, on being told that Garrick intended to apply for admission, said, "He will disturb us by his buffoonery." Another puts it even more strongly and offensively: "If Garrick does apply, I'll blackball him. Surely one ought to sit in a society like ours,

'Unelbowed by a gamester, pimp, or player.'"

The true account is this: Not long after the formation of the Club, Sir Joshua Reynolds spoke of it to Garrick. "I like it much," said the latter; "I think I shall be of you." "He'll be of us!" said Johnson, when he heard of Garrick's remark; "how does he know we will permit him? The first duke in England has no right to hold such language." Yet when Garrick was proposed in the regular way Johnson warmly supported him—as became such an old friend; although he had taken momentary offence at the somewhat cavalier-like tone of the "I think I shall be of you." Garrick remained a member of the Club till his death.

Thursday, April 29th: General OGLETHORPE'S.

Goldsmith spoke slightingly of Mallet.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, Mallet had talent enough to keep his literary reputation alive as long as he himself lived; and that, let me

tell you, is a good deal."—Goldsmith: "But I cannot agree that it was so. His literary reputation was dead long before his natural death. I consider an author's literary reputation to be alive only while his name will ensure a good price for his copy from the booksellers. I will get you (to Johnson) a hundred guineas for anything whatever that you shall write, if you put your name to it."

One good turn deserves another: this compliment of Goldsmith's was met with an immediate and hearty commendation of his new comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer."

JOHNSON: "I know of no comedy for many years that has so much exhilarated an audience, that has answered so much the great end of comedy—making an audience merry."

Goldsmith observed that the manner in which Garrick had complimented the Queen, in his play called "The Chances," was utterly nauseous in its tone of flattery.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I would not write, I would not give solemnly under my hand, a character beyond what I thought really true; but a speech on the stage, let it flatter ever so extravagantly, is formular. It has always been formular to flatter kings and queens: so much so, that even in our church-service we have 'our most religious king,' used indiscriminately, whoever is king. Nay, they even flatter themselves—'we have been graciously pleased to grant.' No modern flattery, however, is so gross as that of the Augustan age, where the emperor was deified. 'Præsens Divus habebitur Augustus.' And as to meanness (rising into warmth), how is it mean in a player—a showman—a fellow who exhibits himself for a shilling, to flatter his queen? The attempt, indeed, was dangerous; for if it had missed, what became of Garrick, and what became of the queen? As Sir William Temple says of a great general, it is necessary not only that his designs be formed in a masterly manner, but that they should be attended Sir, it is right, at a time when the royal family is with success. not generally liked, to let it be seen that the people like at least one of them."-SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: "I do not see why the profession of a player should be despised; for the great and ultimate end of all the employments of mankind is to produce amusement. Garrick produces more amusement than anybody."-Bos-WELL: "You say, Dr. Johnson, that Garrick exhibits himself for a In this respect he is only on a footing with a lawyer who exhibits himself for his fee, and even will maintain any nonsense or absurdity, if the case require it. Garrick refuses a play or a part which he does not like: a lawyer never refuses."--JOHN-SON: "Why, Sir, what does this prove? only that a lawyer is worse. Boswell is now like lack in the 'Tale of a Tub,' who, when he is puzzled by an argument, hangs himself. He thinks I shall cut him down, but I'll let him hang" (laughing vociferously).— SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: - "Mr. Boswell thinks that the profession of a lawyer being unquestionably honourable, if he can show the profession of a player to be more honourable, he proves his argument."

Friday, April 30th: Mr. BEAUCLERK'S.

Goldsmith being mentioned :-

IOHNSON: "It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows. seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else."— SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: "Yet there is no man whose company is more liked."—Johnson: "To be sure, Sir. When people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer, their inferior while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself is very true—he always gets the better when he argues alone; meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it; but when he comes into company, grows confused, and unable to talk. him as a poet, his 'Traveller' is a very fine performance; ay, and so is his 'Deserted Village,' were it not sometimes too much the echo of his 'Traveller.' Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, as a comic writer, or as an historian, he stands in the first class."—Boswell: "An historian? My dear Sir, you surely will not rank his compilation of the Roman History with the works of other historians of this age?"-Johnson: "Why, who are before him?"—Boswell: "Hume, Robertson, Lord Lyttelton."—John-

SON (his antipathy to the Scotch beginning to rise): "I have not read Hume; but doubtless Goldsmith's history is better than the verbiage of Robertson or the foppery of Dalrymple."—Boswell: "Will you not admit the superiority of Robertson, in whose history we find such penetration—such painting?"—JOHNSON: "Sir, you must consider how that penetration and that painting are em-It is not history, it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw, draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history-piece: he imagines an heroic countenance. You must look upon Robertson's work as romance, and try it by that standard. History it is not. Besides, Sir, it is the great excellence of a writer to put into his book as much as his book will hold. Goldsmith has done this in his history. Now, Robertson might have put twice as much in his book. Robertson is like a man who has packed gold in wool; the wool takes up more room than the gold. No, Sir; I always thought Robertson would be crushed by his own weight-would be buried under his own ornaments. Goldsmith tells you shortly all you want to know: Robertson detains you a great deal too No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils: 'Read over your compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out.' Goldsmith's abridgment is better than that of Lucius Florus or Eutropius; and I will venture to say, that if you compare him with Vertot, in the same places of the Roman History, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying everything he has to say in a pleasing He is now writing a Natural History, and he will make it as entertaining as a Persian tale."

Thus nobly and generously would Johnson administer praise. Had Goldsmith heard the eulogy, can we believe that he would have taken offence at the few words condemnatory of his conversational powers which had preluded such laudation?

JOHNSON: "I remember once being with Goldsnith in West-

minster Abbey. While we surveyed the Poets' Corner, I said to him,

'Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.'
[Perhaps our name also will be mingled with those.]

When we got to Temple Bar, he stopped me, pointed to the heads upon it, and slily whispered me,

'Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur ISTIS.'
[Perhaps our name also will be mingled WITH THOSE.]

Boswell was this evening elected a member of the Literary Club—proposed by Johnson, and supported by Beauclerk.

Saturday, May 1st: The Mitre Tavern.

JOHNSON: "The Irish mix better with the English than the Scotch do; their language is nearer to English; as a proof of which, they succeed very well as players, which Scotchmen do not. Then, Sir, they have not that extreme nationality which we find in the Scotch. I will do you, Boswell, the justice to say, that you are the most unscotchifted of your countrymen. You are almost the only instance of a Scotchman that I have known, who did not at every other sentence bring in some other Scotchman."

Three-fourths of Johnson's supposed hatred of the Scotch was merely good-humoured, witty banter, and the other fourth honest prejudice. This being understood, we now give the very wildest thing he ever said upon the subject, without pausing to crave a single reader's forbearance. Years after, when the Doctor returned from the Hebrides, a London-bred Scotchman asked him what he thought of his country? "It is a very vile country, Sir."—"Well, Sir, God made it."—"Yes, Sir; but he made it for Scotchmen. Comparisons are odious, Sir; but God made Hell!"

On another occasion, a gentleman thought he would succeed in driving our hero into a corner by instancing George Buchanan, whom Johnson held in high estimation—Scotch though he was. "Ah, Dr. Johnson," said he, "what would you have said of Buchanan, had he been an Englishman?" "Why, Sir," said Johnson, after a little pause, "I should not have said of Buchanan, had he been an Englishman, what I will now say of him as a

Scotchman,—that he was the only man of genius his country ever produced."

However, the Doctor was, once in his life, compelled to bethink himself in the matter of his Scotch dislikes. He was told, on one occasion, of a Scotchman who was as violently prejudiced against England as he himself was against Scotland, and was further informed that this gentleman had said of the Doctor, "Damned rascal! to talk as he does of the Scotch." Johnson was silenced instantly; at that moment he saw himself and his prejudice in the face of another man—and he did not like the picture. It is a very suggestive little story.

Friday, May 7th: Messrs. DILLY'S.

This evening is memorable for a long and magnificent debate on Toleration, in which Johnson acquitted himself in a masterly manner. The quantity of *mind* he has thrown into that discussion is marvellous, and will always seem marvellous, let us advance in intellect as we may.

JOHNSON: "Every society has a right to preserve public peace and order, and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of opinions which have a dangerous tendency. magistrate has this right, is using an inadequate word; it is the society for which the magistrate is agent. He may be morally or theologically wrong in restraining the propagation of opinions which he thinks dangerous, but he is politically right.—"Dr. MAYO: "I am of opinion, Sir, that every man is entitled to liberty of conscience in religion; and that the magistrates cannot restrain that right."-Johnson: "Sir, I agree with you. Every man has a right to liberty of conscience, and with that the magistrate cannot interfere. People confound liberty of thinking with liberty of talking; nay, with liberty of preaching. Every man has a physical right to think as he pleases; for it cannot be discovered how he thinks. He has not a moral right, for he ought to inform himself, and think justly. But, Sir, no member of a society has a right to teach any doctrine contrary to what the society holds to be true.

The magistrate, I say, may be wrong in what he thinks; but while he thinks himself right, he may and ought to enforce what he thinks."—Dr. Mayo: "Then, Sir, we are to remain always in error, and truth never can prevail; and the magistrate was right in persecuting the first Christians."—Johnson: "Sir, the only method by which religious truth can be established is by martyr-The magistrate has a right to enforce what he thinks; and he who is conscious of the truth has a right to suffer. I am afraid there is no other way of ascertaining the truth but by persecution on the one hand and enduring it on the other."-GOLDSMITH: "But how is a man to act, Sir? Though firmly convinced of the truth of his doctrine, may he not think it wrong to expose himself to persecution? Has he a right to do so? Is it not, as it were, committing voluntary suicide?"—JOHNSON: "Sir, as to voluntary suicide, as you call it, there are twenty thousand men in an army, who will go without scruple to be shot at, and mount a breach for five pence a day."—GOLDSMITH: "But have they a moral right to do this?"—Johnson: "Nay, Sir; if you will not take the universal opinion of mankind, I have nothing to say. If mankind cannot defend their own way of thinking, I cannot defend it. Sir, if a man is in doubt whether it would be better for him to expose himself to martyrdom or not, he should not do it. He must be convinced that he has a delegation from Heaven."-Goldsmith: "I would consider whether there is the greater chance of good or evil upon the whole. If I see a man who has fallen into a well, I would wish to help him out; but if there is a greater probability that he shall pull me in, than that I shall pull him out, I would not So, were I to go to Turkey, I might wish to convert attempt it. the Grand Signor to the Christian faith; but when I considered that I should probably be put to death without effectuating my purpose in any degree, I should keep myself quiet."-Johnson: "Sir, you must consider that we have perfect and imperfect Perfect obligations, which are generally not to do obligations. something, are clear and positive; as, 'Thou shalt not kill.' But charity, for instance, is not definable by limits. It is a duty to give to the poor; but no man can say how much another should give to the poor, or when a man has given too little to save his soul. In the same manner, it is a duty to instruct the ignorant, and, of consequence, to convert infidels to Christianity; but no man, in the common course of things, is obliged to carry this to such a degree as to incur the danger of martyrdom, as no man is obliged to strip himself to the shirt, in order to give charity. I have said that a man must be persuaded that he has a particular delegation from Heaven."—Goldsmith: "How is this to be known? Our first reformers, who were burnt for not believing bread and wine to be Christ—"—Johnson (interrupting him): "Sir, they were not burnt for not believing bread and wine to be CHRIST, but for insulting those who did believe it. And, Sir. when the first reformers began, they did not intend to be martyred; as many of them ran away as could."—Boswell: "But, Sir, there was your countryman Elwal, who, you told me, challenged King George with his black-guards and his red-guards."-IOHNSON: "My countryman Elwal, Sir, should have been put in the stocks -a proper pulpit for him; and he'd have had a numerous audience. A man who preaches in the stocks will always have hearers enough."-Boswell: "But Elwal thought himself in the right."-Johnson: "We are not providing for mad people; there are places for them in the neighbourhood" (meaning Moorfields). -MAYO: "But, Sir, is it not very hard that I should not be allowed to teach my children what I really believe to be the truth?"-Johnson: "Why, Sir, you might contrive to teach your children extra scandalum; but, Sir, the magistrate, if he knows it. has a right to restrain you. Suppose you teach your children to be thieves?"—Mayo: "This is making a joke of the subject."— IOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, take it thus,—that you teach them the community of goods; for which there are as many plausible arguments as for most erroneous doctrines. You teach them that all things at first were in common, and that no man had a right to anything but as he laid his hands upon it; and that this still is, or ought to be, the rule amongst mankind. Here, Sir, you sap a great principle in society-property. And don't you think the magistrate would have a right to prevent you? Or, suppose you should teach your children the notion of the Adamites, and they should run naked into the streets, would not the magistrate have a right to flog 'em into their doublets?"-Mayo: "I think the magistrate has no right to interfere till there is some overt act."— Boswell: "So, Sir, though he sees an enemy to the state charging a blunderbuss, he is not to interfere till it is fired off!"-MAYO: "He must be sure of its direction against the state."— JOHNSON: "The magistrate is to judge of that. He has no right to restrain your thinking, because the evil centres in yourself. If a man were sitting at this table, and chopping off his fingers, the magistrate, as guardian of the community, has no authority to restrain him, however he might do it from kindness as a parent. Though, indeed, upon more consideration, I think he may; as it is probable, that he who is chopping off his own fingers, may soon proceed to chop off those of other people. If I think it right to steal Mr. Dilly's plate, I am a bad man; but he can say nothing to me. If I make an open declaration that I think so, he will keep me out of his house. If I put forth my hand, I shall be sent to Newgate. This is the gradation of thinking, preaching, and acting; if a man thinks erroneously, he may keep his thoughts to himself, and nobody will trouble him; if he preaches erroneous doctrine, society may expel him; if he acts in consequence of it, the law takes place, and he is hanged."-MAYO: "But, Sir, ought not Christians to have liberty of conscience?"-Johnson: "I have already told you so, Sir. You are coming back to where you were."—Boswell: "Dr. Mayo is always taking a return postchaise, and going the stage over again. He has it at half-price." -JOHNSON: "Dr. Mayo, like other champions for unlimited toleration, has got a set of words. Sir, it is no matter, politically, whether the magistrate be right or wrong. Suppose a club were to be formed, to drink confusion to King George the Third, and a happy restoration to Charles the Third; this would be very bad with respect to the state; but every member of that club must either conform to its rules, or be turned out of it. Old Baxter, I remember, maintains that the magistrate should 'tolerate all things that are tolerable.' This is no good definition of toleration upon any principle; but it shows that he thought some things were not tolerable."-REV. MR. TOPLADY: "Sir, you have untwisted this difficult subject with great dexterity."

The reader will have observed that our friend Goldsmith has not put in a single word since he was interrupted in the midst of his "bread and wine," about the middle of the debate. indeed, towards the close, endeavour to open his mouth once more; but Johnson, who was at the opposite end of the table, and did not perceive the attempt, overpowered him by his mighty voice: whereupon Goldsmith waxed indignant, threw down his hat, looked defiance at the invincible Doctor, and exclaimed bitterly, "Take it!" When Toplady was about to speak, Johnson uttered some sound which Goldsmith understood to be the prelude to another harangue. This was more than Oliver could stand: himself already extinguished, and a friend just about to be so-it was more than flesh and blood could endure. "Sir," said he, to Johnson, "the gentleman has heard you patiently for an hour; pray allow us now to hear him."—Johnson (sternly): "Sir, I was not interrupting the gentleman. I was only giving him a signal of my attention. Sir, you are impertinent."

Goldsmith left the company shortly afterwards.

Would not life be a tame affair to most of us without an occasional little brush of this sort between those who love each other dearly? Goldsmith was wrong—he had misinterpreted the Doctor's mysterious sound; and Johnson was not altogether right—he ought to have allowed Oliver to complete his sentence about the "bread and wine." Yet, in full view of the fine reconciliation which took place that night, we would not have either of the wrongs undone.

Goldsmith had gone to the Club, whither Johnson followed in due course. Burke, Garrick, and some other members had assembled; and Goldsmith was observed sitting in meditative silence, brooding over the afternoon's rupture. Johnson whispered to some of the company, "I'll make Goldsmith forgive me;" he then called to him in a loud voice, "Dr. Goldsmith,—something passed to-day where you and I dined; I ask your pardon." Goldsmith, becoming on the instant his own true and noble self again, answered quietly, "It must be much from you, Sir, that I take ill." What a beautiful little scene; pathetic almost in its

RECONCILIATION.

210

childlike simplicity, and majestic even in its moral grandeur! Truth is often finer than fiction; indeed, there would have been no such thing as fiction known among men had there not lived and moved in our midst real human beings like Oliver Goldsmith and Samuel Johnson.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MEMORABLE LAUGH—TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES—DEATH OF GOLDSMITH—TOUR IN WALES.

(1773—1774.)

LIKE almost all men possessed of large hearts and kindly natures, Johnson had a fond "little language" of affection which he reserved for those he most loved. One very marked use he made of it was in abbreviating his friends' names: Beauclerk became Beau; Boswell, Bozzy; Murphy, Mur; Goldsmith, Goldy; Langton, Lanky; Sheridan, Sherry—passing, in process of time, into Sherry derry. Then, he could laugh too, and in the grand style; sending forth a true Teufelsdröckian peal which shook his own huge sides and made heaven and earth resound. The rest of the company did not always see the joke, to be sure, and therefore could not always understand the explosion; but the sense of humour was in full operation all the same—and that is enough for One evening, for example, when he and Boswell were at Mr. Chambers's in the Temple, the idea of that gentleman's having that very day been commissioned to draw up a common friend's will, struck Johnson as so inordinately funny that it was meat and drink to him for hours after. He called his friend a testator, adding, "I dare say he thinks he has done a mighty thing. won't stay till he gets home to his seat in the country, to produce this wonderful deed: he'll call up the landlord of the first inn on the road; and, after a suitable preface upon the mortality and the uncertainty of life, will tell him that he should not delay making his will; and 'here, Sir,' will he say, 'is my will, which I have just made, with the assistance of one of the ablest lawvers in the kingdom;' and he will read it to him (laughing all the time). believes he has made this will; but he did not make it: you, Chambers, made it for him. I trust you have had more conscience than to make him say, 'being of sound understanding;' ha, ha, ha! I hope he has left me a legacy. I'd have his will turned into verse, like a ballad."

Mr. Chambers, not quite liking this boisterous display, since he felt that some of it was at his own expense, though all of it was unintelligible to him, was uneasy till his guests chose to take their leave. But the laughter did not cease with their exit into the street: it continued, peal after peal, till they got within the There the Doctor almost fell into a convulsion; Temple-gate. had to lay hold of one of the posts at the side of the foot-pavement to keep his body together; and gave birth to burst upon burst, each more extraordinary than the last,—while, in the silence of the night, all the region round, from Temple Bar to Fleet Street, echoed the unwonted sounds. Johnson's laugh was entirely his own, like everything else in and about him. It was a kind of grand growl rather than a laugh of the common sort: Tom Davies used to say, "The Doctor laughs like a rhinoceros." But what chiefly interests us is, that his laughter filled the whole man, and made noise enough to waken the echoes. Salvation is always possible to a man who can laugh at all; but a man who could laugh in that way hardly needed to be saved. We have seen Doctor Johnson in many attitudes, and with admiration in almost all of them; but this, of the author of the "Rambler" holding on by a post in the Temple-gate till he shall get his glorious laugh out, is not the least striking and attractive. He has thrashed a bookseller, bearded an earl, and stood before a king: he has looked into the open grave of his dead Tetty, knelt and prayed by the bedside of his dying old nurse, and worshipped devoutly in the church of St. Clement Danes: he has walked round and round St. James's Square at midnight, resolving to "stand by his country" shoulder to shoulder with poor Savage; and here he is now, on the street at midnight once more, shouting joyously till the very heavens ring again. This man's career on earth was a life, and it does one's heart good to linger over it.

If Johnson was not now giving much out, except in the form of conversation, his diary of this year (1773) shows that he was

taking a good deal in; in short, that he was not idle. The tender conscience of the Doctor himself may be allowed to rebuke him for not doing all that he might—that is beautiful and touching; but it is quite time that we should have done groaning over the idleness of a man who spoke so much and so well. He did what he could: other authors wrote their works, while he spoke his; but that does not constitute a radical distinction between the two kinds of labour. Johnson might have published twenty volumes without producing half the results of his speech.

"Between Easter and Whitsuntide [1773], having always considered that time as propitious to study, I attempted to learn the Low Dutch language." His progress, he adds, was interrupted by a fever, "which, by the imprudent use of a small print, left an inflammation in my useful eye." This passion for knowledge burned in him to the last. Not six months before his death he wished Dr. Burney to teach him the Scale of Music:—"Dr. Burney, teach me at least the alphabet of your language." That was not the desire of an idle man: yet, on January 1st, 1774, we see him reviewing the past year thus:—"This year has passed with so little improvement, that I doubt whether I have not rather impaired than increased my learning."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" August 3, 1773.

" DEAR SIR.

"I shall set out from London on Friday the 6th of this month, and purpose not to loiter much by the way. Which day I shall be at Edinburgh I cannot exactly tell. I suppose I must drive to an inn, and send a porter to find you.

"I am afraid Beattie will not be at his College soon enough for us, and I shall be sorry to miss him; but there is no staying for the concurrence of all conveniences. We will do as well as we can.

" I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

"TO THE SAME.

" August 3, 1773.

"DEAR SIR,

"Not being at Mr. Thrale's when your letter came, I had written the enclosed paper and sealed it; bringing it hither for a frank, I found yours. If anything could repress my ardour, it would be such a letter as yours. To disappoint a friend is unpleasing; and he that forms expectations like yours must be disappointed. Think only when you see me, that you see a man who loves you, and is proud and glad that you love him.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most affectionate,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

" TO THE SAME.

"Newcastle, Aug. 11, 1773.

" DEAR SIR,

"I came hither last night, and hope, but do not absolutely promise, to be in Edinburgh on Saturday. Beattie will not come so soon.

"I am, Sir;

"Your most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

"My compliments to your lady."

"TO THE SAME.

"Saturday Night.

"Mr. Johnson sends his compliments to Mr. Boswell, being just arrived at Boyd's."

His stay in Scotland extended from the 18th of August, the day of his arrival in Edinburgh, to the 22nd of November, that of his departure for London. This period included his famous tour to the Hebrides, the accomplishment of which had been his chief purpose in doing North Britain the honour of a visit. We can only indicate his route here, referring the reader who desires the full details of this interesting excursion to Boswell's Journal of the

Tour and the Doctor's own "Journey to the Western Islands of He came by the way of Berwick-upon-Tweed to Edinburgh; stayed there a few days; went by St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Inverness, and Fort Augustus, to the Hebrides; travelled through Argyleshire by Inverary; thence to Glasgow by Loch Lomond and Dumbarton; then by Loudon to Auchinleck in Ayrshire [Boswell's residence]; thence by Hamilton back to Edinburgh, where he again spent some time. Boswell accompanied him throughout the whole tour, and was found an invaluable companion—as we learn from a letter of the Doctor's to Mrs. Thrale, dated November 3rd, 1773:-- "Boswell will praise my resolution and perseverance, and I shall in return celebrate his good humour and perpetual cheerfulness. He has better faculties than I had imagined; more justness of discernment, and more fecundity of images. It is very convenient to travel with him: for there is no house where he is not received with kindness and respect."

Wherever the travellers went they were well entertained: luxuriously and respectfully by the rich, hospitably and kindly by the poor. Johnson was indeed annoyed at the national self-assertiveness he encountered at every turn; but the genial welcome he always met with, both in humble cottage and lordly hall, flattered his pride and touched his heart. It must never be forgotten that Johnson took a critic's eye with him wherever he went; and such an eye can never be satisfied, however greatly charmed. Referring to a party at which the Doctor had been, some one asked him if he had been gratified. "Not gratified, Sir; but I had fewer objections than usual." This retort, we dare say, expresses with tolerable accuracy his state of mind on leaving Scotland and the Scotch.

" TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" Nov. 27, 1773.

" DEAR SIR,

"I came home last night without any incommodity, danger, or weariness, and am ready to begin a new journey. I shall go to Oxford on Monday. I know Mrs. Boswell wished me well to go; her wishes have not been disappointed.

RETURN TO LONDON.

"Make my compliments to all those to whom my compliments may be welcome.

"Let the box be sent as soon as it can, and let me know when to expect it.

"Inquire, if you can, the order of the Clans: Macdonald is first, Maclean second; further I cannot go.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours affectionately,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

On his return to London he immediately set about preparing an account of his Scotch Tour—a bit of work which led to a more than ordinarily active correspondence with his fellow-traveller, Boswell.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" Jan. 29, 1774.

" DEAR SIR,

í

216

"My operations have been hindered by a cough; at least I flatter myself that if my cough had not come, I should have been further advanced. I have yet heard nothing of my box.

"You must make haste and gather me all you can, and do it quickly, or I will and shall do without it.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, and tell her that I do not love her the less for wishing me away. I gave her trouble enough, and shall be glad, in recompense, to give her any pleasure.

"I would send some porter into the Hebrides, if I knew which way it could be got to my kind friends there. Inquire and let me know.

"Make my compliments to all the Doctors of Edinburgh, and to all my friends, from one end of Scotland to the other.

"Write to me, and send me what intelligence you can: and if anything is too bulky for the post, let me have it by the carrier. I do not like trusting wind and waves.

"I am, dear Sir, your most, &c.,

"Sam. Johnson."

"TO THE SAME.

"London, Fcb. 7, 1774.

"DEAR SIR,

"In a day or two after I had written the last discontented letter, I received my box, which was very welcome.

"Tell Mrs. Boswell that my good intentions towards her still continue. I should be glad to do anything that would either benefit or please her.

"Chambers is not yet gone, but so hurried, or so negligent, or so proud, that I rarely see him. I have, indeed, for some weeks past, been very ill of a cold and cough, and have been at Mrs. Thrale's, that I might be taken care of. I am much better; novæ redeunt in prælia vires; but I am yet tender, and easily disordered. How happy it was that neither of us were ill in the Hebrides.

"The question of Literary Property is this day before the Lords. Murphy drew up the Appellant's case, that is, the plea against the perpetual right. I have not seen it, nor heard the decision. I would not have the right perpetual.

"I will write to you as anything occurs, and do you send me something about my Scottish friends. I have very great kindness for them. Let me know likewise how fees come in, and when we are to see you.

"I am, Sir, yours affectionately,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Our readers will have perceived the Doctor's constantly recurring little hits at Mrs. Boswell, who had evidently not been bewitched by her guest's behaviour and appearance at Auchinleck. We give the explanation of these enigmatical hints in the words of the lady's husband:—" My wife paid him the most assiduous and respectful attention, while he was our guest; so that I wonder how he discovered her wishing for his departure. The truth is, that his irregular hours and uncouth habits, such as turning the candles with their heads downwards, when they did not burn bright enough, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet, could not but be disagreeable to a lady. Besides, she had not that high

LETTERS TO BOSWELL.

admiration of him which was felt by most of those who knew him; and, what was very natural to a female mind, she thought he had too much influence over her husband. She once, in a little warmth, made, with more point than justice, this remark upon that subject: 'I have seen many a bear led by a man; but I never before saw a man led by a bear.'" Mrs. Boswell was wrong, though; for she did not know Johnson as her husband did. This fact must be held as both condemnation and excuse.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" Streatham, June 12, 1774.

"DEAR SIR,

218

"Yesterday I put the first sheets of 'The Journey to the Hebrides' to the press. I have endeavoured to do you some justice in the first paragraph. It will be one volume in octavo, not thick,

"It will be proper to make some presents in Scotland. You shall tell me to whom I shall give; and I have stipulated twenty-five for you to give in your own name. Some will take the present better from me, others better from you. In this you, who are to live in the place, ought to direct. Consider it. Whatever you can get for my purpose send me; and make my compliments to your lady and both the young ones.

"I am, Sir, yours, &c.,
"Sam. Johnson."

"MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, June 24, 1774.

"You do not acknowledge the receipt of the various packets which I have sent to you. Neither can I prevail with you to answer my letters, though you honour me with returns. You have said nothing to me about poor Goldsmith, nothing about Langton."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" July 4, 1774.

"DEAR SIR,

"I wish you could have looked over my book before the printer, but it could not easily be. I suspect some mistakes;

but as I deal, perhaps, more in notions than in facts, the matter is not great, and the second edition will be mended, if any such there be. The press will go on slowly for a time, because I am going into Wales to-morrow.

"Of poor dear Dr. Goldsmith there is little to be told, more than the papers have made public. He died of a fever, made, I am afraid, more violent by uneasiness of mind. His debts began to be heavy, and all his resources were exhausted. Sir Joshua is of opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before?

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Oliver Goldsmith had died on the 4th of April, 1774. So there must be one place ever vacant at all our future social gatherings; one voice fewer in all the conversations that are to come. We shall miss poor Goldy much. Mark these two sentences of Johnson's letter: "Sir Joshua is of opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before?" There went much feeling to the writing of these last six words.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"July 5, 1774.

"DEAR SIR,

"You have reason to reproach me that I have left your last letter so long unanswered, but I had nothing particular to say. Chambers, you find, is gone far, and poor Goldsmith is gone much further. He died of a fever, exasperated, as I believe, by the fear of distress. He had raised money and squandered it, by every artifice of acquisition and folly of expense. But let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very great man.

"I have just begun to print my 'Journey to the Hebrides,' and am leaving the press to take another journey into Wales, whither Mr. Thrale is going, to take possession of, at least, five hundred a year, fallen to his lady. All at Streatham, that are alive, are well.

"I have never recovered from the last dreadful illness, but flatter myself that I grow gradually better; much, however, yet remains to mend. Κύριε ἐλίησον.

"If you have the Latin version of Busy, curious, thirsty fly, be so kind as to transcribe and send it; but you need not be in haste, for I shall be I know not where for at least five weeks. I wrote the following tetrastich on poor Goldsmith:—

"Τὸν τάφον εἰσορᾶς τὸν 'Ολιβαρίοιο, κονίην "Αφροσι μὴ σεμνὴν, Εἐινε, πόδεσσι πάτει. Οἶσι μέμηλε φύσις, μέτρων χάρις, ἔργα παλαιῶν, Κλαίετε ποιητὴν, ἰστόρικον, φυσικόν.

"Please to make my most respectful compliments to all the ladies, and remember me to young George and his sisters. I reckon George begins to show a pair of heels.

"Do not be sullen now, but let me find a letter when I come back.

"I am, dear Sir,
"Your affectionate humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Let not his frailties be remembered: he was a very great man."

Shortly after the above date Johnson took a tour in the Welsh country with his friends the Thrales. The journey occupied nearly three months. Though it did his health good and kept up his spirits (two very great boons to any man), this tour does not appear to have at all impressed itself upon his mind as his visit to Scotland had done. The only remark Boswell ever heard him make upon it was, that "instead of bleak and barren mountains, there were green and fertile ones"; and that "one of the castles in Wales would contain all the castles he had seen in Scotland."

The following letter to Mr. Levett will show that the Doctor had not forgotten the good folks at home while himself taking his pleasure abroad: he never did:—

"TO MR. ROBERT LEVETT.

"Llewenny, in Denbighshire,
"August 16, 1774.

"DEAR SIR,

"Mr. Thrale's affairs have kept him here a great while, nor do I know exactly when we shall come hence. I have sent you a bill upon Mr. Strahan.

"I have made nothing of the ipecacuanha, but have taken abundance of pills, and hope that they have done me good.

"Wales, so far as I have yet seen of it, is a very beautiful and rich country, all enclosed and planted. Denbigh is not a mean town. Make my compliments to all my friends, and tell Frank I hope he remembers my advice. When his money is out, let him have more.

"I am, Sir, your humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

There is something delightfully refreshing in the few home-letters of Johnson which have been preserved: something close and intimate and endearing—something motherly almost. They give us fine "glints" of the warmest corners of the Doctor's heart.

"TO MR. PERKINS.

"October 25, 1774.

"SIR.

"You may do me a very great favour. Mrs. Williams, a gentle-woman whom you may have seen at Mr. Thrale's, is a petitioner for Mr. Hetherington's charity: petitions are this day issued at Christ's Hospital.

"I am a bad manager of business in a crowd; and if I should send a mean man, he may be put away without his errand. I must therefore entreat that you will go, and ask for a petition for Anna Williams, whose paper of inquiries was delivered with answers at the counting-house of the hospital on Thursday the 20th. My servant will attend you thither, and bring the petition home when you have it.

"The petition which they are to give us, is a form which they deliver to every petitioner, and which the petitioner is afterwards

to fill up, and return to them again. This we must have, or we cannot proceed according to their directions. You need, I believe, only ask for a petition; if they inquire for whom you ask, you can tell them.

"I beg pardon for giving you this trouble, but it is a matter of great importance.

"I am, Sir,
"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Mr. Perkins deserves a sentence or two on his own account. He was, for a number of years, the superintendent of Mr. Thrale's brewery, and by-and-by one of its proprietors. Having possessed himself of a fine proof of an admirable mezzotinto of the Doctor, by Doughty, he hung it up in the counting-house.

MRS. THRALE (flippantly): "Why do you put him up in the counting-house?"—MR. PERKINS: "Because, Madam, I wish to have one wise man there."—JOHNSON: "Sir, I thank you. It is a very handsome compliment, and I believe you speak sincerely." A courtly little scene!

CHAPTER XXIV.

OSSIAN-MACPHERSON—THE DOCTOR'S COURAGE—"TAXATION NO TYRANNY."

(1774-1775.)

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

' Nov. 26, 1774

"DEAR SIR,

"Last night I corrected the last page of our 'Journey to the Hebrides.' The printer has detained it all this time, for I had, before I went into Wales, written all except two sheets. 'The Patriot' was called for by my political friends on Friday, was written on Saturday, and I have heard little of it. So vague are conjectures at a distance. As soon as I can, I will take care that copies be sent to you, for I would wish that they might be given before they are bought: but I am afraid that Mr. Strahan will send to you and to the booksellers at the same time. Trade is as diligent as courtesy. I have mentioned all that you recommended. Pray make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell and the younglings. The club has, I think, not yet met.

"Tell me, and tell me honestly, what you think and what others say of our travels. Shall we touch the Continent?

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Nov. 27.—Advent Sunday. I considered that this day, being the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, was a proper time for a new course of life. I began to read the Greek Testament regularly, at one hundred and sixty verses every Sunday. This day I began the Acts.

"In this week I read Virgil's Pastorals. I learned to repeat the Pollio and Gallus. I read carelessly the first Georgic."

"MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, Jan. 19, 1775.

"Be pleased to accept of my best thanks for your 'Journey to the Hebrides,' which came to me by last night's post. I did really ask the favour twice; but you have been even with me by granting it so speedily. Bis dat qui cito dat. Though ill of a bad cold, you kept me up the greatest part of last night; for I did not stop till I had read every word of your book. I looked back to our first talking of a visit to the Hebrides, which was many years ago, when sitting by ourselves in the Mitre Tavern in London, I think about witching time o' night: and then exulted in contemplating our scheme fulfilled, and a monumentum perenne of it erected by your superior abilities. I shall only say, that your book has afforded me a high gratification. I shall afterwards give you my thoughts on particular passages."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR.

" Jan., 1775.

- "I long to hear how you like the book; it is, I think, much liked here. But Macpherson is very furious; can you give me any more intelligence about him, or his Fingal? Do what you can, and do it quickly. Is Lord Hailes on our side?
- "Pray let me know what I owed you when I left you, that I may send it to you.
- "I am going to write about the Americans. If you have picked up any hints among your lawyers, who are great masters of the law of nations, or if your own mind suggest anything, let me know. But mum, it is a secret.
- "Langton is here; we are all that ever we were. He is a worthy fellow, without malice, but not without resentment.
 - "Poor Beauclerk is so ill, that his life is thought to be in danger. Lady Di nurses him with very great assiduity.
 - "Reynolds has taken too much to strong liquor, and seems to delight in his new character." [This is the Doctor's way of joking: there had been no change in Sir Joshua, but Johnson himself had become an abstainer.] "I am, dear Sir,

" Yours most faithfully,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

The famous Macpherson-Ossian controversy had now raged fiercely for a number of years: ever since the publication of "Fingal," indeed, in 1762. Johnson, in his "Tour," had taken a very determined stand on the ground of thorough imposition on the part of Macpherson and utter non-authenticity on the part of the poems themselves. His scepticism was invincible, and his expression of it doggedly severe.

"MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, Feb. 2, 1775.

"As to Macpherson, I am anxious to have from yourself a full and pointed account of what has passed between you and him. It is confidently told here, that before your book came out, he sent to you, to let you know that he understood you meant to deny the authenticity of Ossian's poems; that the originals were in his possession; that you might have inspection of them, and might take the evidence of people skilled in the Erse language; and that he hoped, after this fair offer, you would not be so uncandid as to assert that he had refused reasonable proof. That you paid no regard to his message, but published your strong attack upon him; and then he wrote a letter to you, in such terms as he thought suited to one who had not acted as a man of veracity. You may believe it gives me pain to hear your conduct represented as unfavourable, while I can only deny what is said, on the ground that your character refutes it, without having any information to oppose. Let me, I beg it of you, be furnished with a sufficient answer to any calumny upon this occasion."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"February 7, 1775.

" My DEAR BOSWELL.

"I am surprised that, knowing, as you do, the disposition of your countrymen to tell lies in favour of each other, you can be at all affected by any reports that circulate among them. Macpher son never in his life offered me a sight of any original or of any evidence of any kind;—but thought only of intimidating me by noise and threats, till my last answer—that I would not be

deterred from detecting what I thought a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian—put an end to our correspondence.

"The state of the question is this. He and Dr. Blair, whom I consider as deceived, say that he copied the poem from old manuscripts. His copies, if he had them, and I believe him to have none, are nothing. Where are the manuscripts? They can be shown if they exist, but they were never shown. 'De non existentibus et non apparentibus,' says our law, 'eadem est ratio.' No man has a claim to credit upon his own word, when better evidence, if he had it, may be easily produced. But so far as we can find, the Erse language was never written till very lately for the purposes of religion. A nation that cannot write, or a language that was never written, has no manuscripts.

"But whatever he has he never offered to show. If old manuscripts should now be mentioned, I should, unless there were more evidence than can be easily had, suppose them another proof of Scotch conspiracy in national falsehood.

"Do not censure the expression; you know it to be true."

The precise language employed by Macpherson in his letters to the Doctor is not known; but it must have covered a threat of personal violence, as our Author's final reply proves.

"MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,

"I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

"What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

"Sam. Johnson."

"Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repcl:" and those of our readers who have not forgotten the beating he gave the bookseller Osborne, will easily imagine what an encounter would have been between the renowned Ossian and the author of "The Rambler." Of those great spiritual mysteries that frighten us all in one way or other, Samuel Johnson did stand in awe; but fear of personal danger he hardly knew even by name. When he was travelling in France with the Thrales some years after this, the horses ran away on the very edge of a precipice. The Doctor remained perfectly cool-indifferent even; while the terrified animals were careering along the path, and Mr. and Mrs. Thrale at their wits'-end. "For nothing came of it," he said, "except that Mr. Thrale leaped out of the carriage into a chalk-pit, and came up again, looking as white!" One day, at Mr. Beauclerk's house in the country, on being told that it was dangerous to fire a gun loaded with many balls, he at once put in six or seven, and discharged his piece against a wall. When Langton and he were swimming together near Oxford, on one occasion, the Doctor was warned of the existence of a dangerous pool thereabout: he instantly swam right into the midst of One night he was attacked on the streets by four men; and he kept them all at bay till the watch came up and took both him and his assailants to the round-house. In the theatre at Lichfield, Johnson having for a moment left his chair, which was placed for him between the side-scenes, a gentleman took possession of it; and when its former occupant, on his return, civilly requested to have his own again, he was met with a stubborn refusal: without speaking a syllable more, he pitched both chair and gentleman right down into the pit. Foote, the famous comedian and mimic, had signified his intention to imitate Johnson on the stage. Doctor, having got wit of his intent, asked Tom Davies one day what was the common price of an oak-stick; and, on learning that sixpence was the usual cost, answered, "Why, then, Sir, give me leave to send your servant to purchase me a shilling one. have a double quantity; for I am told Foote means to take me off, as he calls it, and I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity." It is hardly necessary to add that the Doctor never figured on any stage; this doughty purchase saved him.

We now see clearly the full import of Johnson's emphatic words, "Your rage I defy." The stick bought for the back of Foote would doubtless have been applied to that of Macpherson, had the latter been fool enough to attempt the execution of his threat.

But Mr. Macpherson was not the only Scotchman whose indignation was kindled by our Author's account of his Tour; whole hosts of North Britons arose and exclaimed against what they were pleased to think Johnson's prejudiced hatred of both country and people. Their zeal on behalf of their native land had eaten them up. They had looked for nothing but praise; and the Doctor had mingled a little criticism with his approba-They had expected to find their country styled a paradise, and themselves pronounced perfection: Johnson had hinted that the land would not suffer by having a few more trees and hedges planted here and there, and that the natives would lose nothing by thinking and speaking a little less loftily of themselves and one another. In fact, it was Greek meeting Greek, and coming to rather close quarters now and then: it was a true-born Englishman doing the Grand Tour among true-born Scotchmen, and occasionally expressing his Southern mind a little too freely for the patience of his Northern hosts.

Some of the venom thus coursing through the veins of the extremely and painfully Scotch had already discharged itself in the shape of pamphlet after pamphlet written in reply to their English critic; but the last and greatest discharge was made in the form of a volume, larger than Johnson's own, and filled with scurrilous personal abuse. Johnson had only laughed hitherto, but he could not help speaking now. "This fellow must be a blockhead. They don't know how to go about their abuse. Who will read a five-shilling book against me? No, Sir, if they had wit, they should have kept pelting me with pamphlets." But those who did not think through their feeling of nationality did ready justice to the spirit and style in which Johnson had written of Scotland and the Scotch.

The Doctor himself once expressed to a friend his wonder at the extreme jealousy of the Scotch, and their wrath at being told that their country was not so good as England. "None of us," said he, "would be offended if a foreigner who has travelled here should say, that vines and olives don't grow in England." He further added, by way of summing up his thoughts upon the whole subject, "When I find a Scotchman, to whom an Englishman is as a Scotchman, that Scotchman shall be as an Englishman to me."

A fear was expressed, on one occasion, that if the Doctor should ever visit Ireland, he might treat the natives even more rigidly than he had treated the Scotch. "Sir," said he, "you have no reason to be afraid of me. The Irish are not in a conspiracy to cheat the world by false representations of the merits of their countrymen. No. Sir; the Irish are a FAIR PEOPLE;—they never speak well of one another." That joke in the last sentence is a magnificent piece of wit. "A FAIR PEOPLE"-because they never speak well of one another: whereas the Scotch, he afterwards said, "love their country better than truth. All of them,-nay, not all -but droves of them, would come up and attest anything for the honour of Scotland." An unfortunate instance of Scottish nationality that once came before his own eyes had contributed largely to the feeding of his ancient grudge. A Scotchman of some standing in London had requested the Doctor to recommend as teacher of an English school a person of whom the other frankly confessed that he knew nothing, excep' that he was a fellowcountryman. This was a bad case certainly: race-marks and national badges are not to be despised; but they can hardly be held equivalent to a certificate of good conduct from one's youth upwards.

"MR. BOSWELL TO DOCTOR JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, Feb. 18, 1775.

"You would have been very well pleased if you had dined with me to-day. I had for my guests, Macquharrie, young Maclean of Coll, the successor of our friend, a very amiable man, though not marked with such active qualities as his brother; Mr. Maclean of Torloisk, in Mull, a gentleman of Sir Allan's family; and two of the clan Grant: so that the Highland and Hebridean genius

BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

230

reigned. We had a great deal of conversation about you, and drank your health in a bumper. The toast was not proposed by me, which is a circumstance to be remarked, for I am now so connected with you, that anything that I say or do to your honour has not the value of an additional compliment. It is only giving you a guinea out of that treasure of admiration which already belongs to you, and which is no hidden treasure; for I suppose my admiration of you is co-existent with the knowledge of my character.

"I find that the Highlanders and Hebrideans in general are much fonder of your 'Journey,' than the low-country or hither Scots. One of the Grants said to-day, that he was sure you were a man of a good heart, and a candid man, and seemed to hope that he should be able to convince you of the antiquity of a good proportion of the poems of Ossian. After all that has passed, I think the matter is capable of being proved to a certain degree. I am told that Macpherson got one old Erse MS. from Clanranald, for the restitution of which he executed a formal obligation; and it is affirmed, that the Gaelic (call it Erse or call it Irish) has been written in the Highlands and Hebrides for many centuries. It is reasonable to suppose, that such of the inhabitants as acquired any learning, possessed the art of writing as well as their Irish neighbours and Celtic cousins; and the question is, can sufficient evidence be shown of this?

"Those who are skilled in ancient writings can determine the age of MSS., or at least can ascertain the century in which they were written; and if men of veracity, who are so skilled, shall tell us that MSS. in the possession of families in the Highlands and the Isles, are the works of a remote age, I think we should be convinced by their testimony.

"There is now come to this city Ranald Macdonald, from the Isle of Egg, who has several MSS. of Erse poetry, which he wishes to publish by subscription. I have engaged to take three copies of the book, the price of which is to be six shillings, as I would subscribe for all the Erse that can be printed, be it old or new, that the language may be preserved. This man says, that some of his manuscripts are ancient; and, to be sure, one of

them, which was shown to me, does appear to have the duskiness of antiquity.

"The inquiry is not yet quite hopeless, and I should think that the exact truth may be discovered, if proper means be used.

"I am. &c..

" JAMES BOSWELL."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"Feb. 25, 1775.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am sorry that I could get no books for my friends in Scotland. Mr. Strahan has at last promised to send two dozen to you. If they come put the names of my friends into them: you may cut them out, and paste them with a little starch in the book.

"You, then, are going wild about Ossian. Why do you think any part can be proved? The dusky manuscript of Egg is probably not fifty years old; if it be an hundred, it proves nothing. The tale of Clanranald is no proof. Has Clanranald told it? Can he prove it? There are, I believe, no Erse manuscripts. None of the old families had a single letter in Erse that we heard of. You say it is likely that they could write. The learned, if any learned there were, could; but knowing, by that learning, some written language, in that language they wrote, as letters had never been applied to their own. If there are manuscripts, let them be shown, with some proof that they are not forged for the occasion. You say many can remember parts of Ossian. I believe all those parts are versions of the English; at least there is no proof of their antiquity.

"Macpherson is said to have made some translations himself; and having taught a boy to write it, ordered him to say that he had learned it of his grandmother. The boy, when he grew up, told the story. This Mrs. Williams heard at Mr. Strahan's table. Don't be credulous; you know how little a Highlander can be trusted. Macpherson is, so far as I know, very quiet. Is not that proof enough? Everything is against him. No visible manuscript: no inscription in the language: no correspondence among friends: no transaction of business, of which a single scrap

"TAXATION NO TYRANNY."

232

remains in the ancient families. Macpherson's pretence is, that the character was Saxon. If he had not talked unskilfully of manuscripts, he might have fought with oral tradition much longer. As to Mr. Grant's information, I suppose he knows much less of the matter than ourselves.

"In the meantime, the bookseller says that the sale is sufficiently quick. They printed four thousand. Correct your copy wherever it is wrong, and bring it up. Your friends will all be glad to see you. I think of going myself into the country about May.

"I am sorry that I have not managed to send the books sooner. I have left four for you, and do not restrict you absolutely to follow my directions in the distribution. You must use your own discretion.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell: I suppose she is now beginning to forgive me. I am, dear Sir, your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Johnson this year wrote another political pamphlet, entitled "Taxation no Tyranny: an Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress." Like a previous one, published in 1774, and called "The Patriot," this pamphlet must be pronounced a blunder—in both a political and literary regard. We are willing to believe our Author sincere in his opinions upon this American question; but the Government policy was certainly a mistaken one, and Johnson's advocacy of it was in no way calculated to do him honour. To say that the language employed in these pamphlets is often violent, and that the writer's opponents are not always treated very gently, is simply to remind ourselves that it was Johnson who was fighting, and fighting on the This fact must not, however, be overlooked, that almost all the thinkers in Great Britain might in those days have been quite fairly divided into two great classes-Whigs and Tories; and precisely what Johnson did and said on the Tory side, was being done and said by good and honest men on the Whig side. It was felt, in those times, as a kind of taint, and

THE ROOTS OF JOHNSON'S CHARACTER. 233

not, as now, a mark of fine distinction, to be classed as belonging to No Party. Yet it by no means follows that the roots of Johnson's character lay in his political sympathies; that he "gave up to a few what was meant for mankind." His highest life was lived, his noblest truths proclaimed, and his best deeds done, quite outside the walls of the British House of Commons. The ground over which Johnson travelled as a teacher and consoler to his generation covered all political machinery, and embraced all possible parliaments. Even in writing "The Patriot" and "Taxation no Tyranny," we may be sure he had not entirely forgotten the grand universal truth he had elsewhere announced:

"How small, of all that human hearts endure, That part, which kings or laws can cause or cure."

A LITTLE BIT OF ACTING.

234

CHAPTER XXV.

CONVERSATIONS—A FINE SCENE—JOHNSON AT THE THEATRE— LL,D.

(1775.)

ON Tuesday, March 21st, 1775, our invaluable friend Boswell once more arrived in London. We shall put ourselves under his wing for some time to come: with full confession of our indebtedness to the man who occasionally sat up three or four nights in a week that he might faithfully report the conversations he had just heard.

Boswell [to the Doctor]: "There are very few of your friends, Sir, so accurate that I can venture to put down in writing what they tell me as your sayings."—Johnson: "Why should you write down my sayings?"—Boswell: "I write them down when they are good."—Johnson: "Nay, you may as well write down the sayings of any one else that are good."

But the Doctor's putting-away of his friend's worshipful regard must have been very much of a piece with Cæsar's waving aside of the popular crown as described by Casca: "He put it by once; but for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it." It was only a pretty bit of very natural affectation in both cases.

Friday, March 24th: Literary Club.

A large company assembled: the Doctor not yet present.

They talked of the "Journey to the Western Islands," and of Johnson's leaving the Highlands half a believer in second-sight. Boswell avowed his own conviction of the truth of many of the stories told in corroboration of the doctrine, saying, "He is only willing to believe; I do believe. The evidence is enough for me, though not for his great mind. What will not fill a quart

bottle will fill a pint bottle. I am filled with belief." "Are oyou?" said Mr. Colman; "then cork it up."

The Doctor arrived in the best of spirits, and manifested the fact by a most vigorous attack upon Swift, leading on to an equally determined assault upon Sheridan. We give that on Sheridan.

Johnson: "Sheridan is a wonderful admirer of the tragedy of Douglas,' and presented its author with a gold medal. Some years ago, at a coffee-house in Oxford, I called to him, 'Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Sheridan, how came you to give a gold medal to Home, for writing that foolish play?' This, you see, was wanton and insolent; but I meant to be wanton and insolent. A medal has no value but as a stamp of merit. And was Sheridan to assume to himself the right of giving that stamp? If Sheridan was magnificent enough to bestow a gold medal as an honorary reward of dramatic excellence, he should have requested one of the Universities to choose the person on whom it should be conferred. Sheridan had no right to give a stamp of merit: it was counterfeiting Apollo's coin."

Monday, March 27th: Mr. Strahan's House.

Johnson mentioned that he was to go that evening to Mrs. Abington's benefit. "She was visiting some ladies whom I was visiting, and begged that I would come to her benefit. I told her I could not hear: but she insisted so much on my coming, that it would have been brutal to have refused her."

The Doctor was not loath to retail any little incidents that might give him the air of a gallant young fellow: he was getting an old man now, it is true, but there was no necessity for ringing in till the final summons should arrive. Let him feel himself young as long as he can.

Mr. Strahan quoted a capital saying of the Doctor's: "There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money;" and added, "The more one thinks of this, the juster it will appear."

Mr. Strahan had taken a poor boy from the country as an apprentice, upon Johnson's recommendation. Johnson, inquiring

JOHNSON AT THE THEATRE.

236

after him, said, "Mr. Strahan, let me have five guineas on account, and I'll give this boy one. Nay, if a man recommends a boy, and does nothing for him, it is sad work. Call him down."

The youngster and the sage met in the court-yard at the back of the house. It is a fine scene: a little thick short-legged boy, awe-struck and ill at ease, with this great strong man bending over him and speaking with the sonorous solemnity of one of his own Ramblers.

"Well, my boy, how do you go on?"—"Pretty well, Sir; but they are afraid I ain't strong enough for some parts of the business."

—Johnson: "Why, I shall be sorry for it; for when you consider with how little mental power and corporeal labour a printer can get a guinea a week, it is a very desirable occupation for you. Do you hear—take all the pains you can; and if this does not do, we must think of some other way of life for you. There's a guinea."

Was not this a MAN? And acts like that were being done by Johnson constantly, though only a very few can be brought to the surface here.

In striking contrast to the little scene just presented, we have that of Johnson at Drury Lane in the evening. Forty places had been reserved in the front-boxes of the theatre for a body of wits whom Sir Joshua Reynolds had engaged to bring together to the lady's benefit. The Doctor occupied one of these; but, as he could neither see nor hear at that distance from the stage, and with his infirmities, he could only sit in grave meditation upon some inward drama which was being acted in his own mind. Such dramas, however, were to him easily brought up; and he sat out patiently the whole performance—a five-act drama and a farce of two acts that followed. He had gone to do the lady honour, rather than to get for himself a pleasure; and such selfdenial always brings compensation along with it. He was afterwards asked, too persistently for his liking, why he had gone to a place where he could have had no expectation of enjoyment. "Why, Sir, did you go to Mrs. Abington's benefit? Did you see?"—Johnson: "No, Sir."—"Did you hear?"—Johnson: "No, Sir."—"Why then, Sir, did you go?"—Johnson: "Because, Sir, she is a favourite of the public; and when the public cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit too."

These blows of the Doctor's come down with stunning effect: yet so much wit and refined humour descend with the heavy hand that the person hit always seems to pass silently out of sight rather than to be rudely knocked on the head. Johnson's own delicacy thus mercifully and cleverly interposed to break his victim's fall.

Saturday, April 1st: Johnson's House.

Johnson's friends had often observed a peculiarity of his which none of them, however, had hitherto been bold enough to mention to the Doctor himself. At the Club he had been frequently noticed pocketing the Seville oranges after squeezing the juice out of them into his drink, and in a furtive sort of way which made the company infer that he did not wish to be discovered in the act. Boswell at last laid a bet with Lady Beauclerk that he would broach the subject with Johnson on the earliest convenient occasion; and this morning he perceived, on entering the Doctor's room, the spoils of the night before—some fresh peels nicely scraped and cut into pieces.

BOSWELL: "Oh, Sir, I now partly see what you do with the squeezed oranges you put into your pocket at the Club."—Johnson: "I have a great love for them."—Boswell: "And pray, Sir, what do you do with them? You scrape them, it seems, very neatly, and what next?"—Johnson: "Let them dry, Sir."—Boswell: "And what next?"—"Johnson: "Nay, Sir, you shall know their fate no further."—Boswell: "Then the world must be left in the dark. It must be said, 'he scraped them and let them dry; but what he did with them next he never could be prevailed upon to tell."—Johnson: "Nay, Sir, you should say it more emphatically:—he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friends, to tell."

Perhaps this little bit of catechising might have been met with a worse grace had not Johnson that very morning received an honour which could not but put him into the grandest of humours:—

"TO THE REVEREND DR. FOTHERGILL,

"Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, to be communicated to the Heads of Houses, and proposed in Convocation.

"Downing Street, March 23, 1775.

"MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND GENTLEMEN,-

"The honour of the degree of M.A. by diploma, formerly conferred upon Mr. Samuel Johnson, in consequence of his having eminently distinguished himself by the publication of a series of essays, excellently calculated to form the manners of the people, and in which the cause of religion and morality has been maintained and recommended by the strongest powers of argument and elegance of language, reflected an equal degree of lustre upon the University itself.

"The many learned labours which have since that time employed the attention and displayed the abilities of that great man, so much to the advancement of literature and the benefit of the community, render him worthy of more distinguished honours in the Republic of Letters; and I persuade myself that I shall act agreeably to the sentiments of the whole University, in desiring that it may be proposed in Convocation to confer on him the degree of Doctor in Civil Law, by diploma, to which I readily give my consent; and am, Mr. Vice-Chancellor and Gentlemen,

"Your affectionate friend and servant,

" North."

The diploma reached him on the 1st of April, 1775. Johnson seems never to have assumed the title, but to have continued to call himself plain Mr.: yet he doubtless carried about with him ever afterwards a fine inward consciousness of distinction—all the finer that he kept it hid. Johnson was a delicate-souled man, and this modest reserve was most becoming. Moreover, he did not need to parade his medals: "celebrity may blush and be silent, and win a grace the more."

Boswell paid the Doctor another visit in the evening, and drank tea with him and Mrs. Williams. Johnson mentioned that he had been in company with a famous traveller; but our Author was too sceptical a hearer of marvels to be greatly liked as an audience by any world-wanderer whose talk happened to be composed chiefly of wonders. Had Bruce told him about the Abyssinian habit of cutting slices of meat off the living beast and then coolly driving the brute on again, he would probably have kicked the speaker down-stairs. Boswell asked him if the gentleman he had just seen and heard was not a man of sense.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, he is not a distinct relater; and I should say, he is neither abounding nor deficient in sense. I did not perceive any superiority of understanding."—Boswell: "But will you not allow him a nobleness of resolution, in penetrating into distant regions?"—JOHNSON: "That, Sir, is not to the present purpose. We are talking of sense. A fighting cock has a nobleness of resolution."

Yet, while the Doctor shut his ears close against all tales of "anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," we have seen that he had left Scotland "willing to believe" in second-sight; and we afterwards find him listening greedily to some stories of alchemy and the philosopher's stone. At one time, indeed, he even experimented in chemistry, if haply he might thus realize his dream. Faith, like murder, will out.

Sunday, April 2nd: MR. HOOLE'S House.

"Taxation no Tyranny" being referred to, Johnson said: "I think I have not been attacked enough for it. Attack is the reaction; I never think I have hit hard, unless it rebounds."

What force there is in an utterance like that: I never think I have hit hard, unless it rebounds! The very words come down like a blow; yet always the hand seems sheathed in a glove well wadded with the finest of wit.

Boswell reminded the Doctor that the landlord at Ellon, in Scotland, said that he heard Johnson was the greatest man in England—next to Lord Mansfield.

240 JOHNSON'S HORROR OF SUPERANNUATION.

JOHNSON: "Ay, Sir, the exception defined the idea. A Scotchman could go no further:

'The force of Nature could no farther go."

They spoke of the cheerfulness of Fleet Street, and of its everrushing stream of living faces.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, Fleet Street has a very animated appearance: but I think the tide of human existence is at Charingcross."

We know now how Johnson's soul was torn in his hours of Prayer and Meditation; but ever it was this thought of the fierce and grand and beautiful wealth of life *outside* his own being that brought him up from the depths of self-despair. There is saving virtue for the individual soul, oppressed with the sense of its own narrow lot, in this grand thought of the full tide of life that keeps pulsing through the race.

Johnson remarked upon the unhappiness of a superannuated state of life, and said:—"An eminent tallow-chandler in London, who had acquired a considerable fortune, gave up the trade in favour of his foreman, and went to live at a country-house near town. He soon grew weary, and paid frequent visits to his old shop, where he desired they might let him know their melting-days, and he would come and assist them; which he accordingly did. Here, Sir, was a man, to whom the most disgusting circumstances in the business to which he had been used was a relief from idleness."

Thursday, April 6th: House of Mr. Thomas Davies.

Mr. Hickey, the painter, Mr. Moody, the player, and others,

The Doctor, according to his custom, spoke with contempt of Colley Cibber.

were present.

JOHNSON: "It is wonderful that a man, who for forty years had lived with the great and the witty, should have acquired so ill the talents of conversation; and he had but half to furnish: for one half of what he said was oaths."

Davies said he was the first dramatic writer who introduced genteel ladies upon the stage. Johnson refuted his observation by instancing several such characters in comedies before his time.

DAVIES [trying to defend himself from a charge of ignorance]: "I mean genteel moral characters." "I think," said Hickey, "gentility and morality are inseparable."—Boswell: "By no means, Sir. The genteelest characters are often the most im-Does not Lord Chesterfield give precepts for uniting wickedness and the graces? A man, indeed, is not genteel when he gets drunk; but most vices may be committed very genteelly: a man may debauch his friend's wife genteelly: he may cheat at cards genteelly."—HICKEY: "I do not think that is genteel."— Boswell: "Sir, it may not be like a gentleman, but it may be genteel."-Johnson: "You are meaning two different things. One means exterior grace; the other, honour. It is certain that a man may be very immoral with exterior grace. Lovelace, in 'Clarissa,' is a very genteel and a very wicked character. Tom Hervey, who died t'other day, though a vicious man, was one of the genteelest men that ever lived." Tom Davies instanced Charles the Second.—Johnson [taking fire at any attack upon that Prince, for whom he had an extraordinary partiality]: "Charles the Second was licentious in his practice; but he always had a reverence for what was good. Charles the Second knew his people, and rewarded merit. The Church was at no time better filled than in his reign. He was the best King we have had from his time to the reign of his present Majesty, except James the Second, who was a very good King, but unhappily believed that it was necessary for the salvation of his subjects that they should be Roman Catholics. He had the merit of endeavouring to do what he thought was for the salvation of the souls of his subjects, till he lost a great empire. thought we should not be saved if we were Roman Catholics, had the merit of maintaining our religion, at the expense of submitting ourselves to the government of King William (for it could not be done otherwise),—to the government of one of the most worthless scoundrels that ever existed. No; Charles the Second was not

such a man as —— (naming another King). He did not destroy his father's will. He took money, indeed, from France: but he did not betray those over whom he ruled: he did not let the French fleet pass ours. George the First knew nothing, and desired to know nothing: did nothing, and desired to do nothing; and the only good thing that is told of him is, that he wished to restore the crown to its hereditary successor." He roared with prodigious violence against George the Second. When he ceased, Moody interjected, in an Irish tone, and with a comic look, "Ah! poor George the Second."

Boswell mentioned that Dr. Thomas Campbell had come all the way from Ireland to London, chiefly to see Dr. Johnson. The Doctor did not appear to relish this Sheba-like visit.

DAVIES: "Why, you know, Sir, there came a man from Spain to see Livy, and Corelli came to England to see Purcell, and when he heard he was dead, went directly back again to Italy."—
JOHNSON: "I should not have wished to be dead to disappoint Campbell, had he been so foolish as you represent him; but I should have wished to have been a hundred miles off."

He laughed good-naturedly, though, when Boswell told him that Campbell had said, "Having seen such a man is a thing to talk of a century hence."

Friday, April 7th: A Tavern.

On the mention of Ossian, one of the company suggested an internal objection to the antiquity of the poems in the fact that they contain no reference to the wolf. The mention of the wolf set Johnson a-thinking of other wild beasts; and while Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Langton were earnestly conversing apart, the Doctor broke in upon them with, "Pennant tells of Bears." They still went on talking by themselves, but Johnson was not to be put down; only he waxed louder and louder upon the subject of Bears—that peing the only word which was distinctly heard, and even that only at intervals. The effect was ludicrous in the extreme. Silence having been at last secured, one whole sentence of the Doctor's got for itself a hearing: "We are told that the black bear is innocent; but I should not like to trust

myself with him." Edward Gibbon muttered, with a low growl, "I should not like to trust myself with you."

JOHNSON [in a strong, determined tone, as of a man who knew he was venting heresy]: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel!"

Mrs. Pritchard, the actress, being mentioned, the Doctor said:
—"Her playing was quite mechanical. It is wonderful how little mind she had. Sir, she had never read the tragedy of 'Macbeth' all through. She no more thought of the play out of which her part was taken, than a shoemaker thinks of the skin, out of which the piece of leather, of which he is making a pair of shoes, is cut."

We shall bring this chapter to a close with one or 'two stray remarks of the Doctor's made during these evenings. Of public speaking:—

Johnson: "We must not estimate a man's powers by his being able or not able to deliver his sentiments in public. Isaac Hawkins Browne, one of the first wits of this country, got into Parliament, and never opened his mouth. For my own part, I think it is more disgraceful never to try to speak, than to try it, and fail; as it is more disgraceful not to fight, than to fight and be beaten."—Boswell: "Why, then, is it thought disgraceful for a man not to fight, and not disgraceful not to speak in public?"

—Johnson: "Because there may be other reasons for a man's not speaking in public than want of resolution: he may have nothing to say (laughing). Whereas, Sir, you know courage is reckoned the greatest of all virtues: because, unless a man has that virtue, he has no security for preserving any other."

Mrs. Thrale one evening told a company, in the Doctor's hearing, that he had said, a certain celebrated actor was just fit to stand at the door of an auction-room with a long pole, and cry, "Pray, gentlemen, walk in;" and that a certain author, upon hearing this, had said, that another still more celebrated actor was fit for nothing better than that, and would pick your pocket after you came out.—Johnson: "Nay, my dear lady, there is no wit

in what our friend added; there is only abuse. You may as well say of any man that he will pick a pocket. Besides, the man who is stationed at the door does not pick people's pockets; that is done within, by the auctioneer."

Another day a gentleman told Johnson he had bought a suit of lace for his lady.

JOHNSON: "Well, Sir, you have done a good thing and a wise thing." "I have done a good thing," said the gentleman, "but I do not know that I have done a wise thing."—JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, no money is better spent than what is laid out for domestic satisfaction. A man is pleased that his wife is dressed as well as other people; and a wife is pleased that she is dressed."

On another occasion, he enlarged approvingly on Pope's well-known line,

" Man never is, but always to be blest."

Being pressed to say if he did not think a man might sometimes be supremely happy in the present, "Never," he cried, "but when he is drunk."

On reviewing the past evenings one is again struck with the extraordinary richness of Johnson's mind and the readiness with which he could at all times lay his finger upon each separate piece of treasure just when it was wanted. Never man talked like this man. From a suit of lace to Charles the Second; from orange-peels to patriotism: no subject comes amiss to him. The exact word always comes rolling forth at the exact moment; and twenty pages seem often to have got squeezed into twice as many syllables. We may either say that Johnson did his talking well because he did it easily, or that he did it easily because he could do it well. The slightest appearance of effort would have spoilt the whole. "A panting man thinks of himself as a clever swimmer; but a fish swims much better, and takes his performance as a matter of course."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SACRED DAY-CONVERSATIONS-LETTERS.

(1775.)

ONE of our Author's sacred days was now approaching; the time of Easter was at hand. On Good Friday morning Boswell called upon him, and took breakfast; though the Doctor himself observed a strict fast-taking no bread with his tea, and no milk even. Johnson had fasted often before at the command of stern necessity: he would not refuse to fast now at the bidding of his religious feeling. Let it be remembered also that to this man that was a real act of self-renunciation, and no mere sham which cost him nothing. The religious feeling seeks to clothe itself in many forms; and, although we may not ourselves choose to dress it in a suit of quite such regimental stiffness, we shall not despise the venerable Doctor in his garment of humiliation. dress are proverbially shifty; but the grand principles of spiritual life are always the same. The Doctor's fastings will ever seem beautiful to those who will go to the root of his faith instead of sniffing contemptuously at its sombre-looking flower.

He and Boswell went to St. Clement's Church forenoon and evening; and, at the end of the evening-service, Johnson said to his friend, "Come, you shall go home with me, and sit just an hour." But the promised hour stretched into hours, and the time passed deliciously: the two sitting together in calm happiness, now talking quietly, now silently enjoying—while the thoughts of that day, dedicated to sweet and touching, if also terrible, memories, seemed to hover round them as the winged presences of grand spiritual truths. The Doctor's fighting armour had been laid aside, and he now revelled in the exquisite sense of complete repose. It was a holy time. What talk there was that night had nothing of debate in it, no restless desire for victory: it was

soliloquy rather—a speaking to one's self, or to a friend who can make one feel that speaking to *him* is very much the same thing. At such moments, and in such moods, the consciousness of an audience is intolerable: it is as if the *real* Hamlet were to come forward on the stage and exhibit his "heart of heart" to the vulgar stare of a gaping crowd.

JOHNSON: "All knowledge is, of itself, of some value. There is nothing so minute or inconsiderable, that I would not rather know it than not. In the same manner, all power, of whatever sort, is, of itself, desirable. A man would not submit to learn to hem a ruffle of his wife, or of his wife's maid: but if a mere wish could attain it, he would rather wish to be able to hem a ruffle."

Boswell mentioned that Goldsmith had said to him that he had come too late into the world, for that Pope and other poets had taken up the places in the Temple of Fame.

JOHNSON: "That is one of the most sensible things I have ever heard of Goldsmith. It is difficult to get literary fame, and it is every day growing more difficult. Ah, Sir, that should make a man think of securing happiness in another world, which all who try sincerely for it may attain. In comparison of that, how little are all other things! The belief of immortality is impressed upon all men, and all men act under an impression of it, however they may talk, and though, perhaps, they may be scarcely sensible of it." Boswell said, it appeared to him that some people had not the least notion of immortality; and he mentioned a distinguished gentleman of their acquaintance.-Johnson: "Sir, if it were not for the notion of immortality, he would cut a throat to fill his pockets." When this was quoted to Beauclerk, who knew much more of the gentleman in question than they did, he said, in his acid manner, "He would cut a throat to fill his pockets, if it were not for fear of being hanged." Perhaps Beauclerk was right.

When Boswell was taking his departure, Johnson said: "If you come to settle here, we will have one day in the week on which we will meet by ourselves. That is the happiest conversation where there is no competition, no vanity, but a calm, quiet interchange of sentiment."

Among his "Prayers and Meditations" this evening is registered so: "Boswell sat with me till night; we had some serious talk." He further records that after his friend left him he spent some time in "giving Francis, his servant, some directions for preparation to communicate; in reviewing his life, and resolving on better conduct."

Dear good soul! Strange, is it not? that an evening like this,—marked by no strong incidents and by no brilliant talk—should yet stamp itself deep on one's mind. It is the *Life* of Samuel Johnson we would fain reproduce: and it is just possible that, in trying to conceive the thoughts of that day and to realize the feelings of that night, we are struggling to reach his *life of life*. That may account for our unwillingness to pass away from this Good Friday Eve that has passed away for ever from us. Whatever our creed, we have done well to join the Doctor in his Easter Meditations.

On Sunday, Johnson and Boswell worshipped together at St. Paul's, and afterwards dined with Mrs. Williams at home. Boswell maintained that Horace was wrong in saying that happiness consisted in nil admirari.

JOHNSON: "Sir, as a man advances in life, he gets what is better than admiration,—judgment, to estimate things at their true value." Boswell still insisted that admiration is more pleasing than judgment, as love is more pleasing than friendship. "The feeling of friendship," he said, "is like that of being comfortably filled with roast beef: love, like being enlivened with champagne."—JOHNSON: "No, Sir: admiration and love are like being intoxicated with champagne; judgment and friendship like being enlivened."

On Tuesday, April 18th, Boswell and the Doctor had a delightful drive in Reynolds's coach to the villa of Mr. Cambridge, on the banks of the Thames, near Twickenham, where they were to dine. Johnson was in grand spirits, and everything he saw from the carriage-windows had a new charm for him as he looked at it thus with happy eyes. Nothing appeared common-place, because there was no tinge of sadness anywhere to-day. "What

scene is common-place to the eye that is filled with serene gladness, and brightens all things with its own joy?"

JOHNSON: "It is wonderful, Sir, how rare a quality good-humour is in life. We meet with very few good-humoured men." Boswell instanced a few; but none of them stood the test. One was acid, another was muddy, and so forth; until Johnson, shaking his head and stretching out his legs at full length and smiling benignly, exclaimed: "I look upon myself as a good-humoured fellow." And he was—rightly understood.

In the course of conversation, Johnson remarked that he thought portrait-painting an improper employment for women. "Public practice of any art, and staring in men's faces, is very indelicate in a female." The Doctor, then, would not have taken the chair at any "Woman's Rights" Meeting! Yet the human mind is flexible; and the most rigid Doctor that ever lived might have been bent round to the ladies' side by the forces of the last hundred years brought skilfully to bear.

Boswell had brought with him a bundle of Scotch magazines and newspapers containing all sorts of attacks upon Johnson's "Journey to the Western Islands." Some of them were read aloud now, much to the amusement of our Author, who, picking out one of them, said: "This is the best. But I could caricature my own style much better myself." He defended his saying about Scotch education—"Their learning is like bread in a besieged town: every man gets a little, but no man gets a full meal." "There is," he added, "in Scotland, a diffusion of learning, a certain portion of it widely and thinly spread. A merchant has as much learning as one of their clergy."

They at length reached Mr. Cambridge's villa, and were introduced to their host in the library. Johnson made for the books immediately after he had made his bow, and stood poring over the backs of the volumes. Sir Joshua Reynolds whispered, "He runs to the books as I do to the pictures; but I have the advantage. I can see much more of the pictures than he can of the books." Mr. Cambridge politely said, "Dr. Johnson, I am going, with your pardon, to accuse myself, for I have the same

JOHNSON'S CONVERSATIONAL READINESS. 249

custom which I perceive you have. But it seems odd that one should have such a desire to look at the backs of books."

JOHNSON: "Sir, the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we inquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it. This leads us to look at catalogues, and the backs of books in libraries."

Mark the eagerness—almost fierce—with which he flew at his host's remark, as if he meant to throttle both him and it. Disputation was his intellectual element, and he revelled in it; but some truth, big or little, flashed out in every encounter. Johnson was quite conscious of the possession of this power of extraordinary readiness for all emergencies, and he never feared being taken unawares. As he once remarked, somewhat proudly, "No man, I suppose, leaps at once into deep water who does not know how to swim."

"The Beggars' Opera" was referred to, and the common question, whether or not it was pernicious in its effects, was introduced.

JOHNSON: "As to this matter, which has been very much contested, I myself am of opinion, that more influence has been ascribed to 'The Beggars' Opera,' than it in reality ever had; for I do not believe that any man was ever made a rogue by being present at its representation. At the same time, I do not deny that it may have some influence, by making the character of a rogue familiar, and in some degree pleasing." Then [collecting himself, as it were, to give a heavy stroke]: "There is in it such a labefactation of all principles as may be injurious to morality."

On one or two subsequent occasions, about this period, the Doctor made the following observations:—

Speaking of an acquaintance famous for his stores of miscellaneous information, he said: "You know, Sir, he runs about with little weight upon his mind."

Talking of another who was hot-tempered and quarrelsome, and

had to avoid society on that account, he observed: "Sir, he leads the life of an outlaw."

It was asked whether it was reasonable for a man to be angry at another man whom a woman had preferred before him. Johnson replied: "I do not see, Sir, that it is reasonable for a man to be angry at another whom a woman has preferred to him: but angry he is, no doubt; and he is loath to be angry at himself." That last clause is exquisite.

We said just now that disputation was the Doctor's intellectual element, and that he revelled in it; but Johnson was equally at home in another and finer element; and how he worked there is best seen in such letters as this:—

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ.

" May 21, 1775.

" DEAR SIR,

"I have an old amanuensis in great distress. I have given what I think I can give, and begged till I cannot tell where to beg again. I put into his hands this morning four guineas. If you could collect three guineas more, it would clear him from his present difficulty.

"I am, Sir, your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" May 27, 1775.

"DEAR SIR.

"I make no doubt but you are now safely lodged in your own habitation, and have told all your adventures to Mrs. Boswell and Miss Veronica. Pray teach Veronica to love me. Bid her not mind mamma.

"Mrs. Thrale has taken cold, and been very much disordered, but I hope is grown well. Mr. Langton went yesterday to Lincolnshire. Beauclerk talks of going to Bath. I am to set out on Monday; so there is nothing but dispersion.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, though she does not love me. You see what perverse things ladies are, and how little

fit to be trusted with feudal estates. When she mends and loves me, there may be more hope of her daughters.

"I will not send compliments to my friends by name, because I would be loath to leave any out in the enumeration. Tell them, as you see them, how well I speak of Scotch politeness, and Scotch hospitality, and Scotch beauty, and of everything Scotch, but Scotch oat-cakes, and Scotch prejudices.

"Sam. Johnson."

We can excuse the Doctor for not loving our national prejudices, but his dislike to our national cakes must be put down to his own bad taste. Could the good old man's visit to our land have been postponed for a hundred years, he would have found among us none but very honest prejudices—like his own; and that discovery would have made our Scotch bannocks much sweeter in his mouth.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" London, August 27, 1775.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am returned from the annual ramble into the middle counties. Having seen nothing I had not seen before, I have nothing to relate. Time has left that part of the island few antiquities; and commerce has left the people no singularities. I was glad to go abroad, and, perhaps, glad to come home; which is, in other words, I was, I am afraid, weary of being at home, and weary of being abroad. Is not this the state of life? But, if we confess this weariness, let us not lament it; for all the wise and all the good say, that we may cure it.

"For the black fumes which rise in your mind, I can prescribe nothing but that you disperse them by honest business or innocent pleasure, and by reading, sometimes easy, and sometimes serious. Change of place is useful, and I hope that your residence at Auchinleck will have many good effects.

"Mrs. Thrale was so entertained with your 'Journal,' that she almost read herself blind. She has a great regard for you.

"Of Mrs. Boswell, though she knows in her heart that she does not love me, I am always glad to hear any good, and hope that

252 THE DOCTOR "CHAFFS" MRS. BOSWELL.

she and the little dear ladies will have neither sickness nor any other affliction. But she knows that she does not care what becomes of me, and for that she may be sure that I think her very much to blame.

"Sam. Johnson."

"TO THE SAME.

"September 14, 1775.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I now write to you, lest in some of your freaks and humours you should fancy yourself neglected. Such fancies I must entreat you never to admit, at least never to indulge; for my regard for you is so radicated and fixed, that it is become part of my mind, and cannot be effaced but by some cause uncommonly violent; therefore, whether I write or not, set your thoughts at rest. I now write to tell you that I shall not very soon write again, for I am to set out to-morrow on another journey.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, if she is in good humour with me.

"I am, Sir, &c.,
"Sam. Johnson."

The Doctor, it appears, is to set out on another journey "to-morrow," but we must leave him here to-day; only begging the reader's special attention to the amusing fact that Johnson never despatches a letter to his friend Boswell without "chaffing," in a deliciously quaint way, his late hostess. "Pray teach Veronica to love me. Bid her not mind mamma." "Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, though she does not love me," and so on. There was a world of fun (of its kind) in our good grave Doctor, and this was one of his little ways of giving it out.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TOUR IN FRANCE-NOTES FROM THE DOCTOR'S DIARY-TABLEAU.

(1775.).

"TO MR. ROBERT LEVETT.

" Calais, Sept. 18th, 1775.

"DEAR SIR,

"We are here in France, after a very pleasing passage of no more than six hours. I know not when I shall write again, and therefore I write now, though you cannot suppose that I have much to say. You have seen France yourself. From this place we are going to Rouen, and from Rouen to Paris, where Mr. Thrale designs to stay about five or six weeks. We have a regular recommendation to the English resident, so we shall not be taken for vagabonds. We think to go one way and return another, and see as much as we can. I will try to speak a little French; I tried hitherto but little, but I spoke sometimes. If I heard better, I suppose I should learn faster.

"I am, Sir, your humble servant,
"Sam. Johnson."

This, then, is the journey on which the Doctor was to "set out to-morrow," and which he seems to have entered upon as quite a matter of course—nothing less than a Tour in France with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. Nothing puts this man about: he who is master of his own soul finds himself at home in every country, and is not set gaping in wide-mouthed wonder by the sight of every new face.

"TO THE SAME.

" Paris, Oct. 23, 1775.

"DEAR SIR,

"We are still here, commonly very busy in looking about us.

We have been to-day at Versailles. You have seen it, and I shall not describe it. We came yesterday from Fontainebleau, where the Court is now. We went to see the King and Queen at dinner, and the Queen was so impressed by Miss, that she sent one of the gentlemen to inquire who she was. I find all true that you have ever told me of Paris. Mr. Thrale is very liberal, and keeps us two coaches, and a very fine table; but I think our cookery very bad.

"Mrs. Thrale got into a convent of English nuns, and I talked with her through the grate, and I am very kindly used by the English Benedictine friars. But upon the whole I cannot make much acquaintance here; and though the churches, palaces, and some private houses, are very magnificent, there is no very great pleasure, after having seen many, in seeing more; at least the pleasure, whatever it be, must some time have an end, and we are beginning to think when we shall come home. Mr. Thrale calculates that as we left Streatham on the fifteenth of September, we shall see it again about the fifteenth of November.

"I think I had not been on this side of the sea five days before I found a sensible improvement in my health. I ran a race in the rain this day, and beat Baretti. Baretti is a fine fellow, and speaks French, I think, quite as well as English.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Williams; and give my love to Francis, and tell my friends that I am not lost.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your affectionate, humble, &c.,
"Sam. Johnson."

"Iran a race in the rain this day, and beat Baretti." It does one's heart good to see the old man of nearly three-score years and ten making himself merry in this way like a little child; resolving,

"Spite of care, and spite of grief,
To gambol with Life's falling Leaf."

That race is worth half-a-dozen Ramblers.

" BOSWELL TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, Oct 24, 1775.

"MY DEAR SIR.

"If I had not been informed that you were at Paris, you should have had a letter from me by the earliest opportunity, announcing the birth of my son on the oth instant. I now write, as I suppose your fellow-traveller, Mr. Thrale, will return to London this week, to attend his duties in Parliament, and that you will not stav behind him.

"Shall we have a 'Journey to Paris' from you in the winter? What a different scene have you viewed this autumn from that which you viewed in autumn 1773!"

Johnson never wrote any full account of this journey into France: but he kept a faithful and minute diary of his life and observations there from Oct. 10th to Nov. 4th. We shall give a few of these memoranda as specimens of the whole.

Oct. 11th, Wednesday.—"The French have no laws for the maintenance of their poor.—Monk not necessarily a priest.—Benedictines rise at four; are at church an hour and a half; at church again half an hour before, half an hour after, dinner; and again from half an hour after seven to eight. They may sleep eight Bodily labour wanted in monasteries.

"The poor taken to hospitals, and miserably kept.—Monks in the convent, fifteen; -accounted poor."

Oct. 16th, Monday .- "Austin Nuns .- Grate .- Mrs. Fermor, Abbess. She knew Pope, and thought him disagreeable.—Mrs. - has many books; has seen life.—Their frontlet disagreeable.—Their hood.—Their life easy.—Rise about five; hour and half at chapel; dine at ten. Another hour and a half at chapel -half an hour about three, and half an hour more at seven; four hours in chapel.—A large garden.—Thirteen pensioners.— Teacher complained.

"At the Boulevards saw nothing, yet was glad to be there. -Rope-dancing and farce.-Egg-dance.

"N. [Note.] Near Paris, whether on week-days or Sundays, the roads empty."

Oct. 17th, Tuesday.—"	At	the	P	ala	is	Ma	arc	han	d I	bought
A snuff-box .									24	livres.
 .									6	,,
Table-book		•							15	,,
Scissors 3 p. (pair)	•				•		•	•	18	,,
	1	T.ix	/TP	رء					62	.,, -21, 125, 6d.

"The Palais Bourbon, belonging to the Prince of Condé. Only one small wing shown;—lofty;—splendid;—gold and glass.
—The battles of the great Condé are painted in one of the rooms. The present prince a grandsire at thirty-nine.

"The sight of palaces, and other great buildings, leaves no very distinct images, unless to those who talk of them. As I entered, my wife was in my mind: she would have been pleased. Having now nobody to please, I am little pleased."

Tetty's spirit walking again; in France exactly as in Fleet Street: "multum amatam, diuque defletam," never forgotten.

Oct. 21st, Saturday.—" In the night I got round.—We came home to Paris.—I think we did not see the chapel.—Tree broken by the wind.—The French chairs made all of boards painted.

"N. Soldiers at the court of justice.—Soldiers not amenable to the magistrates.—Dijon woman.

"Fagots in the palace. — Everything slovenly, except in the chief rooms.—Trees in the roads, some tall, none old, many very young and small.

"Women's saddles seem ill-made. Queen's bridle woven with silver.—Tags to strike the horse."

Oct. 22nd, Sunday.—"To Versailles, a mean town. Carriages of business passing.—Mean shops against the wall.—Our way lay through Sêve (Sêvres), where is the china manufacture.—Wooden bridge at Sêve, in the way to Versailles.—The palace of great extent.—The front long; I saw it not perfectly.—The menagerie. Cygnets dark; their black feet; on the ground; tame.—Halcyons, or gulls.—Stag and hind, young.—Aviary, very large: the net, wire.—Black stag of China, small.—Rhinoceros, the horn broken and pared away, which, I suppose, will grow; the basis, I think, four inches across; the skin folds like loose cloth doubled over

his body, and cross his hips; a vast animal, though young: as big, perhaps, as four oxen.—The young elephant, with his tusks just appearing.—The brown bear put out his paws;—all very tame.—The lion.—The tigers I did not well view.—The camel or dromedary with two bunches called the Huguin, taller than any horse.—Two camels with one bunch.—Among the birds was a pelican, who, being let out, went to a fountain, and swam about to catch fish. His feet well webbed: he dipped his head, and turned his long bill sidewise. He caught two or three fish, but did not eat them.

"Trianon is a kind of retreat appendant to Versailles. an open portico; the pavement, and, I think, the pillars of marble. -There are many rooms which I do not distinctly remember.-A table of porphyry, about five feet long, and between two and three broad, given to Louis XIV. by the Venetian State.—In the councilroom almost all that was not door or window, was, I think, lookingglass.—Little Trianon is a small palace like a gentleman's house. -The upper floor paved with brick.-Little Vienne.-The court is ill paved. The rooms at the top are small, fit to soothe the imagination with privacy. In the front of Versailles are small basins of water on the terrace, and other basins, I think, below There are little courts.—The great gallery is wainscotted with mirrors, not very large, but joined by frames. I suppose the large plates were not yet made.—The playhouse was very large.— The chapel I do not remember if we saw.—We saw one chapel, but I am not certain whether there or at Trianon. The foreign office paved with bricks.—The dinner half a louis each, and, I think, a louis over.-Money given at menagerie, three livres; at palace, six livres."

Oct. 28th, Saturday.—"Hotel, a guinea a day.—Coach, three guineas a week.—Valet de place, three l. a day.—Avant-coureur, a guinea a week.—Ordinary dinner, six l. a head.—Our ordinary seems to be about five guineas a day.—Our extraordinary expenses, as diversions, gratuities, clothes, I cannot reckon.—Our travelling is ten guineas a day.

"White stockings, 18 l. Wig.-Hat."

Oct. 29th, Sunday.—"We saw the boarding-school,—the Enfans trouvés.—A room with about eighty-six children in cradles,

as sweet as a parlour.—They lose a third; take in to perhaps more than seven [years old]; put them to trades; pin to them the papers sent with them.—Want nurses.—Saw their chapel.

"Went to St. Eustatia; saw an innumerable company of girls catechised, in many bodies, perhaps 100 to a catechist.—Boys taught at one time, girls at another.—The sermon; the preacher wears a cap, which he takes off at the name:—his action uniform, not very violent."

Oct. 31st, Tuesday.—"I lived at the Benedictines; meagre day; soup meagre, herrings, eels, both with sauce; fried fish; lentils, tasteless in themselves. In the library; where I found Maffeus's de Historiá Indicá: Promontorium flectere, to double the Cape. I parted very tenderly from the Prior and Friar Wilkes."

These jottings are quite sufficient to prove that Johnson used his eyes when abroad, and that, at short distances, these eyes were good. Foote, who happened to be in Paris at the same time with our Author, was wont afterwards to keep himself and his company merry by describing the French people's surprise at the Doctor's figure and manner, and at his dress-which, said Foote, he obstinately refused to adapt to the foreign fashions. declaration must, however, be held mistaken; for our readers will have observed in one of the above notes: "White stockings, Wig.-Hat:" from which it is only fair to infer that Johnson's conservatism in the matter of dress had broken down under the pressure of French modes. In his regular Journal also we find it written that he had laid out thirty pounds in clothes for this journey. His figure and manners, however, could hardly fail to strike a stranger. One thoroughly characteristic trait in the Doctor comes out in the fact that he persistently declined to talk French during his whole tour: he always spoke in Latin. versing in the French language, with which he was not very familiar, made him feel himself a child: it seemed mere babbling -and the Doctor did not like that. Latin was dignified, and gave a grand air to even the tritest observation: moreover, he was master of it. On one occasion, indeed, at home, he was heard talking in French to a Frenchman who replied in English; and,

on being asked his reason for transgressing his own law in this case, he answered: "Because I think my French is as good as his English." But he would not commit himself thus on the other side of the Channel.

To learn what chiefly interested the Doctor in this foreign journey we have only to refer once more to the notes already quoted: now, as always, it was men and things. Mr. Thrale, who loved natural scenery, made many desperate attempts, in the course of their travels, to get Johnson to lift up his eyes and admire likewise. But all would not do: "Never heed such nonsense," the Doctor would say; "a blade of grass is always a blade of grass, whether in one country or another: let us, if we do talk, talk about something: men and women are my subjects of inquiry; let us see how these differ from those we have left behind." He carried Fleet Street with him wherever he went; believing more devoutly than most in Pope's famous axiom,

"The proper study of mankind is MAN."

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" November 16, 1775.

" DEAR SIR,

"I am glad that the young laird is born, and an end, as I hope, put to the only difference that you can ever have with Mrs. Boswell. I know that she does not love me; but I intend to persist in wishing her well till I get the better of her.

"Paris is, indeed, a place very different from the Hebrides, but it is to a hasty traveller not so fertile of novelty, nor affords so many opportunities of remark. I cannot pretend to tell the public anything of a place better known to many of my readers than to myself. We can talk of it when we meet.

"I have been remarkably healthy all the journey, and hope you and your family have known only that trouble and danger which has so happily terminated. Among all the congratulations that you may receive, I hope you believe none more warm or sincere than those of.

"Dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

" November 16, 1775.

"DEAR MADAM,

"This week I came home from Paris. I have brought you a little box, which I thought pretty; but I know not whether it is properly a snuff-box, or a box for some other use. I will send it, when I can find an opportunity. I have been through the whole journey remarkably well. My fellow-travellers were the same whom you saw at Lichfield, only we took Baretti with us. Paris is not so fine a place as you would expect. The palaces and churches, however, are very splendid and magnificent; and what would please you, there are many very fine pictures; but I do not think their way of life commodious or pleasant.

"Let me know how your health has been all this while. I hope the fine summer has given you strength sufficient to encounter the winter.

"Make my compliments to all my friends; and if your fingers will let you, write to me, or let your maid write to me, if it be troublesome to you. I am, dear Madam,

"Your most affectionate humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

Mark the simple beauty of the style of that letter, and the kindly concern the Doctor shows for Lucy's "fingers"—"write, if your fingers will let you." These are the little things that lie round about the heart of this man's life: we cannot note them too carefully. The next letter is equally fine:—

"TO THE SAME.

" December, 1775.

"DEAR MADAM,

"Some weeks ago I wrote to you to tell you that I was just come home from a ramble, and hoped that I should have heard from you. I am afraid winter has laid hold on your fingers, and hinders you from writing. However, let somebody write, if you cannot, and tell me how you do, and a little of what has happened at Lichfield among our friends. I hope you are all well.

"When I was in France, I thought myself growing young, but

am afraid that cold weather will take part of my new vigour from me. Let us, however, take care of ourselves, and lose no part of our health by negligence.

"I never knew whether you received the Commentary on the New Testament, and the Travels, and the glasses.

"Do, my dear love, write to me; and do not let us forget each other. This is the season of good wishes, and I wish you all good. I have not lately seen Mr. Porter [Lucy's brother], nor heard of him. Is he with you?

"Be pleased to make my compliments to Mrs. Adey, and Mrs. Cobb, and all my friends; and when I can do any good, let me know. I am, dear Madam,

"Yours most affectionately,

"Sam. Johnson."

So our Author is once more safely home in his native England and his beloved Fleet Street: safely and gladly. French life was not cosy enough for him; it was spent too much in the open air: and French manners were much too volatile for the grave old Doctor. But the journey did his health good, improved his spirits, and added largely to his already vast stores of knowledge. "Sir, I have seen all the visibilities of Paris, and around it; but to have formed an acquaintance with the people there, would have required more time than I could stay. I was just beginning to creep into acquaintance by means of Colonel Drumgold, a very high man, Sir, head of L'Ecole Militaire, a most complete character, for he had first been a professor of rhetoric, and then became a soldier. And, Sir, I was very kindly treated by the English Benedictines, and have a cell appropriated to me in their convent."

And, as summing up the whole, let us give the following:—
"The great in France live very magnificently, but the rest very miserably. There is no happy middle state as in England. The shops of Paris are mean; the meat in the markets is such as would be sent to a gaol in England; and Mr. Thrale justly observed, that the cookery of the French was forced upon them by necessity; for they could not eat their meat, unless they added

some taste to it. The French are an indelicate people; they will spit upon any place. At Madame ——'s, a literary lady of rank, the footman took the sugar in his fingers, and threw it into my coffee. I was going to put it aside; but hearing it was made on purpose for me, I e'en tasted Tom's fingers. The same lady would needs make tea à l'Anglaise. The spout of the teapot did not pour freely; she bade the footman blow into it. France is worse than Scotland in everything but climate. Nature has done more for the French; but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done."

We do not know that England has always reason to feel proud of those sons and daughters of hers whom she sends forth, season after season, to make the Tour of the Continent according to all the approved modes. But when she despatched Samuel Johnson thither she sent across her Representative Man: and the Doctor fulfilled his mission well. Wherever he went he was recognized as a scholar, a gentleman, and a genius: a thoroughly original man. The enthusiasm he awakened was at times half-amusing, in some of its manifestations at least. At Rouen, for example, he pronounced a long eulogium upon Milton, so eloquent and so ardent that the Abbé Roffette, to whom he was addressing it, at length jumped up from his seat and flung his arms round the Doctor's neck. History does not record how the Doctor enjoyed his hug; but we should have liked to see that embrace. Let our little French drama close with this pleasing tableau.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VISIT TO OXFORD—THE DOCTOR AND HIS WIGS—CONVERSATIONS
—EULOGY ON INNS.

(1776.)

On Friday, March 15th, 1776, Boswell again arrived in London, and found that the Doctor had removed from Johnson's Court, No. 7, to Bolt Court, No. 8,—still fondly clinging to Fleet Street, however. The two friends met next day at Mr. Thrale's, in the Borough, and sunshine passed into the faithful Boswell's soul with the first look of the Doctor's face.

Boswell [to Mrs. Thrale, after Johnson had talked for a while]: "I am now, intellectually, *Hermippus redivivus*; I am quite restored by him, by transfusion of *mind*."—Mrs. Thrale [to Boswell]: "There are many who admire and respect Mr. Johnson; but you and I *love* him."

It had been arranged that Mr. and Mrs. Thrale should take the Doctor on a tour to Italy early in April, and Johnson seemed delighted with the prospect. "But," said he, "before leaving England I am to take a jaunt to Oxford, Birmingham, my native city, Lichfield, and my. old friend Dr. Taylor's, at Ashbourne, in Derbyshire. I shall go in a few days, and you, Boswell, shall go with me."

In the course of that day Johnson and his friend, by way of pleasant excursion, took boat and crossed over to Blackfriars. As they moved placidly along the river, Boswell spoke of a little volume which, quite unknown to the Doctor, was advertised as immediately forthcoming, under the title, "Johnsoniana, or Bon Mots of Dr. Johnson."

JOHNSON: "Sir, it is a mighty impudent thing."—Boswell: "Pray, Sir, could you have no redress if you were to prosecute a publisher for bringing out, under your name, what you never said,

and ascribing to you dull, stupid nonsense, or making you swear profanely, as many ignorant relaters of your bon-mots do?"—Johnson: "No, Sir; there will always be some truth mixed with the falsehood, and how can it be ascertained how much is true and how much is false? Besides, Sir, what damages would a jury give me for having been represented as swearing?"—Boswell: "I think, Sir, you should at least disavow such a publication, because the world and posterity might with much plausible foundation say, 'Here is a volume which was publicly advertised and came out in Dr. Johnson's own time, and by his silence was admitted by him to be genuine.'"—Johnson: "I shall give myself no trouble about the matter."

Johnson: "The value of every story depends on its being true. A story is a picture either of an individual or of human nature in general; if it be false, it is a picture of nothing. For instance: suppose a man should tell that Johnson, before setting out for Italy, as he had to cross the Alps, sat down to make himself wings. This many people would believe; but it would be a picture of nothing. * * * * (naming a worthy friend of theirs) used to think a story a story till I showed him that truth was essential to it." Boswell observed that Foote entertained people with stories which were not true: but that, indeed, it was properly not as narratives that Foote's stories pleased, but as collections of ludicrous images.—"Johnson: "Foote is quite impartial, for he tells lies of everybody."

The Doctor's own perfect truthfulness, even to the minutest details, was one of his most striking and admirable characteristics. All his friends knew this, and any story—however odd—if related by him, was at once and unhesitatingly believed. "A gentlewoman," said he, once, "begged I would give her my arm to assist her in crossing the street, which I accordingly did; upon which she offered me a shilling, supposing me to be the watchman. I perceived that she was somewhat in liquor." Told by most people this would have passed as a good story only; but the Doctor's marked simplicity of character and strong veracity of nature won for the anecdote ready credence. One never needs

to look behind this man's words to find his meaning: every sentence carries its signification on its front.

By this time our excursionists had landed at the Temple stairs, where they parted, — to meet again in the evening in Mrs. Williams's room.

There they talked of religious orders.

JOHNSON: "It is as unreasonable for a man to go into a Carthusian convent for fear of being immoral, as for a man to cut off his hands for fear he should steal. There is, indeed, great resolusion in the immediate act of dismembering himself: but when that is once done, he has no longer any merit; for though it is out of his power to steal, yet he may all his life be a thief in his heart. All severity that does not tend to increase good, or prevent evil, is absurd. I said to the Lady Abbess of a convent, 'Madam, you are here, not for the love of virtue, but the fear of vice.' She said, 'I shall remember this as long as I live.'"

About this time, he enlarged, as he often did, upon the misery of a sailor's lot.

Johnson: "A ship is worse than a gaol. There is, in a gaol, better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger. When men come to like a sea-life, they are not fit to live on land." "Then," said Boswell, "it would be cruel in a father to breed his son to the sea."—Johnson: "It would be cruel in a father who thinks as I do. Men go to sea before they know the unhappiness of that way of life; and when they have come to know it, they cannot escape from it, because it is then too late to choose another profession; as, indeed, is generally the case with men, when they have once engaged in any particular way of life."

On Tuesday, March 19th, the day fixed for their jaunt to Johnson's native district, they met in the morning at a coffee-house, where they were taken up by the Oxford coach and set off on their journey—accompanied by Mr. Gwyn, the architect, and another gentleman whom they did not know. The whole party

were in excellent spirits, and the Doctor in fine conversational trim.

Boswell observed that Garrick would soon have an easier life, being about to quit the stage.

Johnson: "I doubt that, Sir."—Boswell: "Why, Sir, he will be Atlas with the burden off his back."—Johnson: "But I know not if he will be so steady without his load. However, he should never play any more, but be entirely the gentleman, and not partly the player; he should no longer subject himself to be hissed by a mob, or to be insolently treated by performers, whom he used to rule with a high hand, and who would gladly retaliate."—Boswell: "I think he should play once a year for the benefit of decayed actors, as it has been said he means to do."—Johnson: "Alas, Sir, he will soon be a decayed actor himself."

Johnson expressed his disapproval of ornamental architecture, "because it consumes labour disproportionate to its utility;" for the same reason he ridiculed statuary. "Painting," said he, "consumes labour not disproportionate to its effect; but a fellow will hack half a year at a block of marble to make something in stone that hardly resembles a man. The value of statuary is owing to its difficulty. You would not value the finest head cut upon a carrot."

The spirit of the architect in Gwyn rebelled against this (as he thought) heathenish assault, and he exclaimed: "What, Sir, you will allow no value to beauty in architecture or in statuary! Why should we allow it then in writing? Why do you take the trouble to give us so many fine allusions, and bright images, and elegant phrases? You might convey all your instruction without these ornaments."—Johnson [smiling complacently]: "Why, Sir, all these ornaments are useful, because they obtain an easier reception for truth; but a building is not at all more convenient for being decorated with superfluous carved work."

The Doctor censured the architect for having taken down a church which might have stood many years, and having built a new one at a different place, for no other reason but that there might be a direct road from it to a new bridge: his expression

was: "You are taking a church out of the way, that the people may go in a straight line to the bridge." "No, Sir," said Gwyn; "I am putting the church in the way, that the people may not go out of the way."—Johnson (with a hearty loud laugh of approbation): "Speak no more. Rest your colloquial fame upon this."

They arrived at Oxford, where Boswell and the Doctor parted with their fellow-travellers, and themselves put up at the Angel Inn.

Talking of constitutional melancholy:-

Johnson: "A man so afflicted, Sir, must divert distressing thoughts, and not combat with them."—Boswell: "May not he think them down, Sir?"—Johnson: "No, Sir. To attempt to think them down is madness. He should have a lamp constantly burning in his bed-chamber during the night, and, if wakefully disturbed, take a book and read, and compose himself to rest. To have the management of the mind is a great art, and it may be attained in a considerable degree by experience and habitual exercise."—Boswell: "Should not he provide amusements for himself? Would it not, for instance, be right for him to take a course of chemistry?"—Johnson: "Let him take a course of chemistry, or a course of rope-dancing, or a course of anything to which he is inclined at the time. Let him contrive to have as many retreats for his mind as he can, as many things to which it can fly from itself."

In recommending reading in bed, and in authorising a course of chemistry, the Doctor only preached his own practice, as the following passage from Mrs. Thrale's "Anecdotes" will show:—"Dr. Johnson was always exceeding fond of chemistry: and we made up a sort of laboratory at Streatham one summer, and diverted ourselves with drawing essences and colouring liquors. But the danger Mr. Thrale found his friend in one day when I was driven to London, and he had got the children and servants round him to see some experiments performed, put an end to all our entertainment; so well was the master of the house persuaded that his short sight would have been his destruction in a moment, by bringing him close to a fierce and brilliant flame. Indeed it was

a perpetual miracle that he did not set himself on fire reading abed, as was his constant custom, when exceedingly unable to keep clear of mischief with our best help; and, accordingly, the fore-tops of all his wigs were burned by the candle down to the very network. Mr. Thrale's valet-de-chambre, for that reason, kept one always in his own hands, with which he met him at the parlour-door when the bell had called him down to dinner; and as he went upstairs to sleep in the afternoon, the same man constantly followed him with another. Future experiments in chemistry, however, were too dangerous, and Mr. Thrale insisted that we should do no more towards finding the philosopher's stone." This daily consumption of wigs was bad enough; but a general conflagration resulting from chemical mal-arrangements would have been more dreadful still.

Next morning, our friends paid a visit to Dr. Adams, Master of Pembroke College. The Doctor, who had written an answer (or only a reply, perhaps?) to Hume's "Essay on Miracles," mentioned that he had once dined with the Scotch philosopher in London. Boswell maintained that an infidel writer like Hume was unworthy of such friendly recognition, and declared that ridicule was the most fitting weapon with which to assail sceptical works—that personal abuse of the author even might not come amiss in such a case. Adams demurred to this last declaration.

JOHNSON: "When a man voluntarily engages in an important controversy, he is to do all he can to lessen his antagonist, because authority from personal respect has much weight with most people, and often more than reasoning. If my antagonist writes bad language, though that may not be essential to the question, I will attack him for his bad language."—ADAMS: "You would not jostle a chimney-sweeper?"—JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, if it were necessary to jostle him down."

That was a capital retort of Johnson's; but if his "chimney-sweeper" had persisted in constantly getting up again—as black as ever and quite as formidable—would not the Doctor have tired of this jostling process? But there are people among us who honestly believe that David Hume has never been down yet.

They walked with Adams into the Master's garden and into the common room.

JOHNSON (after a reverie of meditation): "Ay! here I used to play at draughts with Phil. Jones and Fludyer. Jones loved beer, and did not get very forward in the Church. Fludyer turned out a scoundrel, a Whig, and said he was ashamed of having been bred at Oxford. He had a living at Putney, and got under the eye of some retainers to the Court at that time, and so became a violent Whig; but he had been a scoundrel all along, to be sure."—Boswell: "Was he a scoundrel, Sir, in any other way than that of being a political scoundrel? Did he cheat at draughts?"—Johnson: "Sir, we never played for money."

Speaking of Dr. John Campbell's chief work, "A Political Survey of Great Britain," Johnson remarked: "That work was his death" [meaning, because of his disappointment on account of its bad success.]—Mr. Warton: "I believe so; from the great attention he bestowed on it."—Johnson: "Nay, Sir; he died of want of attention, if he died of that book."

Boswell mentioned Sir Richard Steele as having written "The Christian Hero," not to show what its author was, but to keep before his own mind the picture of what he wished to be.

JOHNSON: "Steele, I believe, practised the lighter vices."

Upon such men the Doctor was never unduly hard; the thought of poor Savage seems always to have risen and checked a too harsh rebuke. To moral weakness this man was ever very merciful: he had a strait creed made for himself, and he wore it too; but he would not attempt to squeeze every man into his narrow jacket.

Next morning, Thursday, March 21st, our travellers set out in a post-chaise to pursue their ramble. The day was glorious, and, as they drove through Blenheim Park, Boswell remarked: "You and I, Sir, have, I think, seen together the extremes of what can be seen in Britain—the wild, rough island of Mull, and Blenheim Park."

They dined luxuriously at an inn at Chapelhouse; and there the Doctor pronounced his ever-memorable eulogium upon a tavern-life.

JOHNSON: "There is no private house in which people can enjoy themselves so well as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy, in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests-the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house, as if it Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom were his own. from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome; and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, Sir, there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn."

In the afternoon, as they were being whirled rapidly along in the chaise, Johnson exclaimed with fervour, "Life has not many things better than this." Could he have said the same of the wild rush of a modern railway-carriage?

They stopped at Stratford-upon-Avon, and took tea, which the Doctor doubtless enjoyed all the more that it was brewed upon classic ground.

He spoke slightingly of Dyer's "Fleece." "The subject, Sir, cannot be made poetical. How can a man write poetically of serges and druggets? Yet you will hear many people talk to you gravely of that excellent poem, 'The Fleece.'"

Of Dr. Grainger's "Sugar Cane" he said, scornfully, "What could be made of a sugar-cane? One might as well write 'The Parsley-Bed, a Poem;' or, 'The Cabbage-Garden, a Poem.'"—Boswell: "You must then pickle your cabbage with the sal atticum."—Johnson: "You know there is already 'The Hop-Garden, a Poem;' and, I think, one could say a great deal

about cabbage. The poem might begin with the advantages of civilised society over a rude state, exemplified by the Scotch, who had no cabbages till Oliver Cromwell's soldiers introduced them; and one might thus show how arts are propagated by conquest, as they were by the Roman arms."

Boswell told him that he heard Dr. Percy meant to write the history of the wolf in Great Britain.

JOHNSON: "The wolf, Sir! why the wolf? Why does he not write of the bear, which we had formerly? Nay, it is said we had the beaver. Or why does he not write of the grey rat—the Hanover rat, as it is called, because it is said to have come into this country about the time that the family of Hanover came? I should like to see 'The History of the Grey Rat, by Thomas Percy, D.D., Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty," (laughing immoderately).—Boswell: "I am afraid a Court chaplain could not decently write of the grey rat."—Johnson: "Sir, he need not give it the name of the Hanover rat."

They put up that night at the tavern at Henley, where Shenstone had written his famous eulogy on inns—a eulogy which the Doctor enthusiastically endorsed:—

"Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round, Where'er his stages may have been, May sigh to think he still has found The warmest welcome at an inn."

CHAPTER XXIX.

JOHNSON VISITS HIS NATIVE DISTRICT—CONVERSATIONS—THE DOCTOR AND AN OLD SCHOOL-MATE.

(1776.)

Our travellers set out early next morning for Birmingham, reached it about nine o'clock, breakfasted, and then went to Mr. Hector's. On the way Johnson remarked, "You will see, Sir, at Mr. Hector's, his sister, Mrs. Careless, a clergyman's widow. She was the first woman with whom I was in love. It dropped out of my head imperceptibly; but she and I shall always have a kindness for each other." When they reached the house, "Master is gone out," said the servant-girl, in the Warwickshire dialect; "he is gone to the country." Johnson: "My name is Johnson; tell him I called. Will you remember the name?"—GIRL: "I don't understand you, Sir."—Johnson: "Blockhead, I'll write." He did, however, make another attempt to get his name into her ear, roaring as loud as he could "Johnson," whereupon the stupid girl at last caught the sound.

They next called at Mr. Lloyd's, a Quaker friend of the Doctor's. He too was from home, but his wife received the strangers kindly, and asked them to dinner. "After the uncertainty of all human things at Hector's," said Johnson, "this invitation came very well."

As they strolled through the town Mr. Lloyd joined them in the street; and shortly after they met *Friend Hector*—in Quaker phraseology, and in fact as well. It did Boswell's eyes good, he says, to see Johnson's meeting with his old schoolfellow—so warm was the greeting on both sides. Mr. Lloyd delicately took Boswell off, and thus the two were left together till dinner-time, when all the company re-assembled at our Quaker friend's house.

After dinner Mr. Hector took Boswell to see Bolton's grea

ironworks. "I sell here, Sir," said Mr. Bolton, "what all the world desires to have—power." That was well spoken. On returning to Mr. Hector's they found the Doctor there, sitting cosily at tea with his old sweetheart.

Johnson lamented to Hector the state of one of their old schoolfellows, Mr. Charles Congreve, a clergyman, whom he thus described:-"He obtained, I believe, considerable preferment in Ireland, but now lives in London, quite as a valetudinarian, afraid to go into any house but his own. He takes a short airing in his post-chaise every day. He has an elderly woman, whom he calls cousin, who lives with him, and jogs his elbow when his glass has stood too long empty, and encourages him in drinking, in which he is very willing to be encouraged: not that he gets drunk, for he is a very pious man, but he is always muddy. He confesses to one bottle of port every day, and he probably drinks more. He is quite unsocial; his conversation is quite monosyllabical; and when, at my last visit, I asked him what o'clock it was, that signal of my departure had so pleasing an effect on him, that he sprung up to look at his watch, like a greyhound bounding at a hare."

This is one of the many striking photographs which the fine eye of Johnson's intellect *took*, and his grand memory preserved.

Here is another life-like portrait, which he brought forward on another occasion—that of Mr. Fitzherbert, of Derbyshire:—"There was no sparkle, no brilliancy, in Fitzherbert; but I never knew a man who was so generally acceptable. He made everybody quite easy, overpowered nobody by the superiority of his talents, made no man think worse of himself by being his rival, seemed always to listen, did not oblige you to hear much from him, and did not oppose what you said. Everybody liked him; but he had no friend, as I understand the word, nobody with whom he exchanged intimate thoughts. People were willing to think well of everything about him. A gentleman was making an affected rant, as many people do, of great feelings about 'his dear son,' who was at school near London; how anxious he was lest he might be ill, and what he would give to see him. 'Can't you,' said Fitzherbert, 'take a post-chaise and go to him?' This, to

be sure, finished the affected man; but there was not much in it. However, this was circulated as wit for a whole winter, and I believe part of a summer too; a proof that he was no very witty man. He was an instance of the truth of the observation, that a man will please more upon the whole by negative qualities than by positive; by never offending than by giving a great deal of delight. In the first place, men hate more steadily than they love; and if I have said something to hurt a man once, I shall not get the better of this, by saying many things to please him."

Johnson had been all his life storing up such thoughts and images, and he dropped them thus, in seemingly careless profusion. That man was never idle but when he slept.

Take, as a last specimen, the following picture of Bet Flint:

—"Bet wrote her own life in verse, which she brought to me, wishing that I would furnish her with a preface to it (laughing). I used to say of her, that she was generally slut and drunkard;—occasionally whore and thief. She had, however, genteel lodgings, a spinnet on which she played, and a boy that walked before her chair. Poor Bet was taken up on a charge of stealing a counterpane, and tried at the Old Bailey. Chief Justice——. who loved a wench, summed up favourably, and she was acquitted, After which Bet said, with a gay and satisfied air, 'Now that the counterpane is my own, I shall make a petticoat of it.'"

Look long enough through these little holes, and you will have the vision of a strange and wonderfully varied life.

When the Doctor took his leave, he said to Hector, "Don't grow like Congreve; nor let me grow like him when you are near me."

Talking again, that evening, of Mrs. Careless, Johnson said:—
"If I had married her, it might have been as happy for me."—
Boswell: "Pray, Sir, do you not suppose that there are fifty
women in the world, with any one of whom a man may be as happy as with any one woman in particular?"—Johnson: "Ay, Sir, fifty thousand."—Boswell: "Then, Sir, you are not of opinion with some who imagine that certain men and certain women are made for each other; and that they cannot be happy

if they miss their counterparts."—Johnson: "To be sure not, Sir. I believe marriages would in general be as happy, and often more so, if they were all made by the Lord Chancellor, upon a due consideration of the characters and circumstances, without the parties having any choice in the matter."

Tetty would not have liked to hear that: but the Doctor was not serious just then; that was the talk of one of his *moods*, and not the real outcome of his deepest feeling. That feeling we already know—his Diary and his Meditations have betrayed him again and again.

The Doctor being impatient to reach his native city that night, the travellers continued their journey in the dark. Johnson was pensive and silent, his meditations seeming to have taken the colour of the gloom without. When they came within sight of the Lichfield lamps he exclaimed, "Now we are getting out of a state of death." All sadness had fled, however, by the time they had got comfortably housed at the Three Crowns—a good old-fashioned inn, next door to the house in which Johnson was born and brought up. They supped like princes, and became actually jolly. "A tavern-chair is the throne of human felicity," our Author once declared; and here he was now monarchizing with no fewer than Three Crowns over his royal brow.

At dinner next day they had as a guest a Mr. Jackson, one of the Doctor's old schoolmates—a poor fellow, in a coarse grey coat, black waistcoat, greasy leather breeches, and yellow uncurled wig, with a countenance, moreover, which told a tale not of sobriety. He had tried to be a cutler in Birmingham; but, failing in that, had taken to dressing leather in some new and improved way, of which he gave the Doctor a full account, and to which the Doctor listened with marked attention,—meaning to give the broken man his best advice. Great friends or small, Johnson forgets none of them; though the needy and the unfortunate have always most of his sympathy. As he looked at the "coarse grey coat" and battered appearance of this old schoolfellow, he may have thought of his own shoeless days at college, and his own homeless wanderings about the London streets. That

memory would give gentleness to his speech and sweetness to his manner to-day.

Johnson and his friend then paid a visit to the museum of Mr. Richard Green, apothecary—a fine collection of antiquities, natural curiosities, and ingenious works of art. The Doctor expressed his admiration of the activity, diligence, and good fortune which had enabled a single man to bring together so great and interesting a variety of objects: "Sir, I should as soon have thought of building a man-of-war as of collecting such a museum."

On Monday, while breakfasting at Mrs. Porter's, the Doctor received a letter which seemed to agitate him greatly. After reading it, he exclaimed, "One of the most dreadful things that has happened in my time!" Boswell, expecting to hear of something like an assassination of the King, or another "gunpowder plot," asked, with alarm, "What is it, Sir?"—Johnson: "Mr. Thrale has lost his only son! This is a total extinction to their family, as much as if they were sold into captivity."—Boswell: "But Mr. Thrale has daughters to inherit his wealth."—Johnson (warmly): "He'll no more value his daughters than-" [Boswell was about to speak]. "Sir, don't you know how you yourself think? Sir, he wishes to propagate his name."— Boswell: "It is lucky you were not present when this misfortune happened."—Johnson: "It is lucky for me. People in distress never think that you feel enough."—Boswell: "And, Sir, they will have the hope of seeing you, which will be a relief in the meantime; and when you get to them, the pain will be so far abated, that they will be capable of being consoled by you, which, in the first violence of it, I believe would not be the case." - Johnson: "No, Sir; violent pain of mind, like violent pain of body, must be severely felt."—Boswell: "I own, Sir, I have not so much feeling for the distress of others as some people have, or pretend to have; but I know this, that I would do all in my power to relieve them."-JOHNSON: "Sir, it is affectation to pretend to feel the distress of others as much as they do themselves. It is equally so, as if one should pretend to feel as much pain while a friend's leg is cutting off, as he does. No, Sir; you

have expressed the rational and just nature of sympathy. I would have gone to the extremity of the earth to have preserved this boy."

After dinner, he wrote a letter of sympathy to Mrs. Thrale.

Boswell: "It will be very distressing to Thrale: but his wife will soon forget it; she has so many things to think of."—Johnson: "No, Sir; Thrale will forget it first. She has many things that she may think of. He has many things that he must think of."

How this man's mind bristles with wise thoughts, and how a little touch of contradiction sets all the bristles on end!

In the evening they went to the Town Hall, which had been transformed into a theatre for the time being. The Doctor occupied a conspicuous place in the pit, and was surveyed with worshipful eyes by his old townsfolk. That is a fine picture of the good people of Lichfield proudly delighting to honour the grand old Doctor who had given their city a new name. The old man himself would have many reflections as he sat in the midst of them all that night: one wonders if good Dame Oliver and her simple-hearted present of gingerbread came into his mind among his other quaint and tender remembrances. But he was not sad though the Past would thus come back upon him: he was quite gay and merry. Boswell afterwards remarked that he blamed himself for being so happy when poor Mr. and Mrs. Thrale were in deep distress. Johnson: "You are wrong, Sir; twenty years hence Mr. and Mrs. Thrale will not suffer much pain from the death of their son. Now, Sir, you are to consider that distance of place, as well as distance of time, operates upon the human feelings. I would not have you be gay in the presence of the distressed, because it would shock them; but you may be gay at a distance. Pain for the loss of a friend, or of a relation whom we love, is occasioned by the want which we feel. In time the vacuity is filled with something else; or sometimes the vacuity closes up of itself."

But mark the Doctor's delicacy withal: "I would not have you be gay in the presence of the distressed, because it would shock them." Remember, also, that other saying of his: "I would have gone to the extremity of the earth to have preserved this boy." And

he would have kept his word, though he did not choose to whine and whimper now.

On Tuesday they drove to Ashbourne, and dined with Johnson's old schoolfellow, the Reverend Dr. Taylor. The Doctor repeated to his host the account he had already given Mr. Hector of Charles Congreve, concluding his relation with an admirable and touching remark: "There is nothing against which an old man should be so much upon his guard as putting himself to nurse."

Johnson talked approvingly of one who had attained to the state of the philosopher's ideal man—wanting nothing.

Boswell: "Then, Sir, the savage is a wise man." "Sir," said he, "I do not mean simply being without, but not having a want." Boswell maintained, against this proposition, that it was better to have fine clothes, for instance, than not to feel the want of them. Johnson: "No, Sir; fine clothes are good only as they supply the want of other means of procuring respect. Was Charles the Twelfth, think you, less respected for his coarse blue coat and black stock? And you find the King of Prussia dresses plain, because the dignity of his character is sufficient."—Boswell: "Would not you, Sir, be the better for velvet embroidery?"—Johnson: "Sir, you put an end to all argument, when you introduce your opponent himself. Have you no better manners? There is your want."

They left Ashbourne on Wednesday evening, stopped to change horses at Derby—where Johnson had the pleasure of quarrelling with a North Briton about the Scotch Militia Bill—and put up for the night at Loughborough.

On Thursday they pursued their journey. At Leicester they read in the newspaper that Dr. James was dead. Boswell, always on the look-out for sentiment, expected to see his friend shed tears, or otherwise exhibit over this sad announcement of the death of an old schoolfellow; but the Doctor only said, "Ah! poor Jamy!" Afterwards, however, when they were in the chaise, he spoke more to Boswell's satisfaction, saying tenderly, "Since I set out on this jaunt I have lost an old friend and a young one—Dr. James and poor Harry." Shall we never come to believe

that bitter tears have been shed, though no handkerchief was seen at the eyes; that many a heavy hurt has been received, though no one heard a cry? There can go much feeling into three little words, "Ah! poor Jamy!"

They lay that night at St. Albans, and breakfasted next morning at Barnet. While they were being rolled swiftly along on the London road that day, Boswell remarked:—"Sir, you observed one day, at General Oglethorpe's, that a man is never happy for the present but when he is drunk. Will you not add, or when driving in a post-chaise?"—Johnson: "No, Sir; you are driving rapidly from something, or to something." A profound deliverance, and a fitting prelude to our travellers' arrival in London—safe, sound, and happy.

Altogether, this has been a delightful time to the venerable Doctor: for Johnson was English of the English; and this ramble of a few days has proved more delicious to him than the whole six weeks' tour in France. The Doctor is at home in this quarter, and he feels it; so much so that he is constrained, every now and then, to leave even Fleet Street that he may see again that spot of earth where his existence beegan. "The earliest and the longest has still the mastery over us."

* THE DOCTOR'S DELICACY.

280

CHAPTER XXX.

JOHNSON'S DELICACY—CONVERSATIONS—THE DOCTOR AND MADAME DE BOUFFLERS—"ROWLEY'S POEMS."

(1776.)

On arriving in London, Johnson lost no time, but drove at once to Mr. Thrale's, where he found the whole household making active preparations for their departure to Bath. The Doctor did not accompany them then, though he joined his friends there in the course of the month. The Italian tour was therefore postponed in the meantime, and ultimately given up altogether. This was a disappointment to the Doctor, who, with a child's eager hopefulness, had already reared a grand palace of delights under the blue Italian skies. But he bore his disappointment unmurmuringly; only remarking, and with much delicacy of feeling, "I shall probably contrive to get to Italy some other way. But I won't mention it to Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, as it might vex them." in little touches like this that Samuel Johnson's exquisite sensitiveness to the finest impressions is made manifest. Mark his fairness, also, to those who had disappointed him: on its being suggested that the journey might have done Mr. and Mrs. Thrale good, the Doctor said: - "I rather believe not, Sir. While grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till grief be digested, and then amusement will dissipate the remains of it."

The richest literary fruits that fell from our Author's lips in many scattered conversations during this period we shall now collect and present on one table.

Mr. Murray, Solicitor-General for Scotland, praised the ancient philosophers for the candour and good-humour with which they carried on their debates.

JOHNSON: "Sir, they disputed with good-humour, because they were not in earnest as to religion. Had the ancients been serious in their belief, we should not have had their gods exhibited in the manner we find them represented in the poets. people would not have suffered it. They disputed with goodhumour upon the fanciful theories, because they were not interested in the truth of them: when a man has nothing to lose he may be in good-humour with his opponent. Accordingly you see. in Lucian, that the Epicurean, who argues only negatively, keeps his temper; the Stoic, who has something positive to preserve, grows angry. Being angry with one who controverts an opinion which you value, is a necessary consequence of the uneasiness which you feel. Every man who attacks my belief diminishes, in some degree, my confidence in it, and therefore makes me uneasy: and I am angry with him who makes me uneasy. Those only who believed in revelation have been angry at having their faith called in question; because they only had something upon which they could rest as matter of fact."-MURRAY: "It seems to me that we are not angry at a man for controverting an opinion which we believe and value; we rather pity him."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, to be sure when you wish a man to have that belief which you think is of infinite advantage, you wish well to him; but your primary consideration is your own quiet. If a madman were to come into this room with a stick in his hand, no doubt we should pity the state of his mind; but our primary consideration would be to take care of ourselves. We should knock him down first, and pity him afterwards. No, Sir, every man will dispute with great good-humour upon a subject in which he is not interested. I will dispute very calmly upon the probability of another man's son being hanged; but if a man zealously enforces the probability that my own son will be hanged, I shall certainly not be in a very good-humour with him."-MURRAY: "But, Sir, truth will always bear an examination."—Johnson: "Yes, Sir; but it is painful to be forced to defend it. Consider, Sir, how you should like. though conscious of your innocence, to be tried before a jury for a capital crime once a week."

It was debated whether legal redress should be obtained when a man's deceased relative was calumniated in a publication.

Johnson: "Sir, it is of so much more consequence that truth should be told, than that individuals should not be made uneasy, that it is much better that the law does not restrain writing freely concerning the characters of the dead. Damages will be given to a man who is calumniated in his lifetime, because he may be hurt in his worldly interest, or at least hurt in his mind; but the law does not regard that uneasiness which a man feels on having his ancestor calumniated. That is too nice. Let him deny what is said, and let the matter have a fair chance by discussion. But if a man could say nothing against a character but what he can prove, history could not be written; for a great deal is known of men of which proof cannot be brought. A minister may be notoriously known to take bribes, and yet you may not be able to prove it."

Boswell: "It is a pity that truth is not so firm as to bid defiance to all attacks, so that it might be shot at as much as people chose to attempt, and yet remain unhurt."—Johnson: "Then, Sir, it would not be shot at. Nobody attempts to dispute that two and two make four: but with contests concerning moral truth human passions are generally mixed, and therefore it must ever be liable to assault and misrepresentation."

A Scotchman mentioned that he had been forty years away from his native land. "Ah, Boswell!" said Johnson, smiling, "what would you give to be forty years from Scotland?"

Boswell, speaking of an unsatisfactory inn at which Johnson and he had put up on one occasion, said, "Let us see now, how we should describe it."—Johnson: "Describe it, Sir? Why, it was so bad that Boswell wished to be in Scotland."

It was asked whether a man who had been guilty of vicious actions would do well to have recourse to an enforced solitude.

JOHNSON: "No, Sir, unless it prevent him from being vicious again. With some people, gloomy penitence is only madness turned upside down. A man may be gloomy, till, in order to be

TALK. 283

relieved from gloom, he has recourse again to criminal indulgences."

Boswell mentioned that Garrick had told him of a Frenchman who, on seeing the great actor in one of his low characters, exclaimed, "Comment I je ne le crois pas. Ce n'est pas Monsieur Garrick, ce grand homme!" Garrick had added, with an appearance of grave recollection, "If I were to begin life again, I think I should not play these low characters." Upon which Boswell had observed, "Sir, you would be in the wrong; for your great excellence is your variety of playing—your representing so well characters so very different."-Johnson: "Garrick, Sir, was not in earnest in what he said; for, to be sure, his peculiar excellence is his variety; and, perhaps, there is not any one character which has not been as well acted by somebody else, as he could do it."-Boswell: "Why, then, Sir, did he talk so?"—Johnson: "Why Sir, to make you answer as you did."—Boswell: "I don't know, Sir; he seemed to dip deep into his mind for the reflection."— JOHNSON: "He had not far to dip, Sir; he had said the same thing, probably, twenty times before."

JOHNSON: "Thomson had a true poetical genius, the power of viewing everything in a poetical light. His fault is such a cloud of words sometimes, that the sense can hardly peep through. Shiels, who compiled 'Cibber's Lives of the Poets,' was one day sitting with me. I took down Thomson, and read aloud a large portion of him, and then asked, 'Is not this fine?' Shiels having expressed the highest admiration, 'Well, Sir,' said I, 'I have omitted every other line.'"

Boswell related a dispute that took place one day in Tom Davies's shop, some years before this, between Goldsmith and Robert Dodsley, on the subject of contemporary poetry. Goldsmith affirmed that there was none worthy of the name; Dodsley maintained that, though you could not find a palace like Dryden's "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," you had villages composed of very pretty houses; and he mentioned particularly "The Spleen." JOHNSON: "I think Dodsley gave up the question. He and

284 TALK.

Goldsmith said the same thing; only he said it in a softer manner than Goldsmith did; for he acknowledged that there was no poetry, nothing that towered above the common mark. You may find wit and humour in verse, and yet no poetry. 'Hudibras' has a profusion of these; yet it is not to be reckoned a poem. 'The Spleen,' in Dodsley's collection, on which you say he chiefly rested, is not poetry."—Boswell: "Does not Gray's poetry, Sir, tower above the common mark?"—Johnson: "Yes, Sir, but we must attend to the difference between what men in general cannot do if they would, and what every man may do if he would."—Boswell: "Then, Sir, what is poetry?"—Johnson: "Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is, but it is not easy to tell what it is."

Talking of a penurious acquaintance of his, Johnson said: "Sir, he is narrow, not so much from avarice as from impotence to spend his money. He cannot find in his heart to pour out a bottle of wine; but he would not much care if it should sour."

The question was discussed whether drinking improved conversation and kindly feeling. Sir Joshua Reynolds took the affirmative; Johnson the negative.

JOHNSON: "No, Sir, before dinner men meet with great inequality of understanding: and those who are conscious of their inferiority have the modesty not to talk. When they have drunk wine, every man feels himself happy, and loses that modesty, and grows impudent and vociferous: but he is not improved; he is only not sensible of his defects." Sir Joshua said the Doctor was talking of the effects of excess in wine; but that a moderate glass enlivened the mind, by giving a proper circulation to the blood. "I am," said he, "in very good spirits, when I get up in the By dinner-time I am exhausted; wine puts me in the morning. same state as when I got up; and I am sure that moderate drinking makes people talk better."-JOHNSON: "No, Sir, wine gives not light, gay, ideal hilarity; but tumultuous, noisy, I have heard none of those drunken clamorous merriment. -nay, drunken is a coarse word-none of those vinous flights.'- SIR JOSHUA: "Because you have sat by, quite sober, and felt an envy of the happiness of those who were drinking."-Johnson: "Perhaps contempt. And, Sir, it is not necessary to be drunk one's self to relish the wit of drunkenness. Do we not judge of the drunken wit, and of the dialogue between Iago and Cassio, the most excellent in its kind, when we are quite sober? Wit is wit, by whatever means it is produced; and, if good, will appear so at all times. I admit that the spirits are raised by drinking, as by the common participation of any pleasure: cock-fighting or bear-baiting will raise the spirits of a company as drinking does, though surely they will not improve conversation. I also admit that there are some sluggish men who are improved by drinking; as there are fruits which are not good till they are rotten. are such men, but they are medlars. I indeed allow that there have been a very few men of talents who were improved by drinking; but I maintain that I am right as to the effects of drinking in general: and let it be considered, that there is no position, however false in its universality, which is not true of some particular man."—SIR WILLIAM FORBES: "May not a man warmed with wine be like a bottle of beer, which is made brisker by being set before the fire?"—Johnson [laughing]: "Nay, I cannot answer that: that is too much for me."

Of a person who differed from him in politics the Doctor said: "In private life he is a very honest gentleman; but I will not allow him to be so in public life. People may be honest, though they are doing wrong: that is between their Maker and them. But we, who are suffering by their pernicious conduct, are to destroy them. We are sure that [——] acts from interest. We know what his genuine principles were. They who allow their passions to confound the distinctions between right and wrong are criminal. They may be convinced; but they have not come honestly by their conviction."

Some one mentioned that a certain female political writer, whose doctrines Johnson disliked, had of late become very fond of dress, sat hours together at her toilet, and even put on rouge.

JOHNSON: "She is better employed at her toilet than using her pen. It is better she should be reddening her own cheeks, than blackening other people's characters."

Speaking of a certain gentleman, he observed: "He never clarified his notions, by filtrating them through other minds. He had a canal upon his estate, where at one place the bank was too low.—'I dug the canal deeper,' said he."

Johnson took a man's measure with amazing rapidity, and did not leave the spot either till he had made him a suit of clothes of the closest fit; and, to crown the whole, both man and measure he carried about with him for evermore.

Nor was this mental and moral tailoring confined to the gentlemen whom he met; of the characters and manners of the ladies also he was a severe critic and a stern judge. "I don't like to fly," said Mrs. Thrale once, with a little air of affectation.

JOHNSON: "With your wings, Madam, you must fly; but have a care, there are dippers abroad." Were ever grace and moral dignity more beautifully combined than in that kingly rebuke?

JOHNSON: "Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son, I think, might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put in the hands of every young gentleman. An elegant manner and easiness of behaviour are acquired gradually and imperceptibly. No man can say, 'I'll be genteel.' There are ten genteel women for one genteel man, because they are more restrained. A man without some degree of restraint is insufferable; but we are all less restrained than women. Were a woman sitting in company to put out her legs before her as most men do, we should be tempted to kick them in."

On another occasion, speaking of these same Letters, he observed: "Every man of any education would rather be called a rascal than accused of deficiency in the graces." Mr. Gibbon, who was present, turned to a lady who knew Johnson well, and, in his quaint manner, tapping his box, addressed her thus: "Don't you think, Madam (looking towards Johnson), that among all your acquaintance you could find one exception?" The lady smiled, and seemed to acquiesce.

But the truth is, Johnson was not so much deficient in the graces themselves as devoid of instruments to bring them into play; the force of politeness was there, but its functional activity had somehow got deranged; he had the very "soul" of refinement within him, but its "limbs and outward flourishes" were often most primitive and uncouth. Perhaps the richest illustration of all this on record is the description which Beauclerk used to give of the Doctor's extraordinary attempt to do the honours of his house to a grand French lady, who had distinguished him by a We give the description in the wag's own words:—" When Madame de Boufflers was first in England, she was desirous to see I accordingly went with her to his chambers in the Temple, where she was entertained with his conversation for some When our visit was over, she and I left him, and were got into Inner Temple Lane, when all at once I heard a noise like This was occasioned by Johnson, who, it seems, upon a little recollection, had taken it into his head that he ought to have done the honours of his literary residence to a foreign lady of quality, and, eager to show himself a man of gallantry, was hurrying down the staircase in violent agitation. He overtook us before we reached the Temple-gate, and, brushing in between me and Madame de Boufflers, seized her hand, and conducted her to her coach. His dress was a rusty-brown morning suit, a pair of old shoes by way of slippers, a little shrivelled wig sticking on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. A considerable crowd of people gathered round, and were not a little struck by his singular appearance."

Of General Oglethorpe's talk the Doctor observed: "Oglethorpe, Sir, never completes what he has to say."

He made a similar remark on Patrick Lord Elibank: "Sir, there is nothing conclusive in his talk."

Lord Elibank's judgment of the *Doctor's* talk was quite the reverse; he once said: "Whatever opinion Johnson maintains, I will not say that he convinces me; but he never fails to show me that he has good reasons for it."

FOHNSON A CAPITAL STORY-TELLER.

. 288

The Doctor, annoyed at hearing a gentleman ask Mr. Levett a number of questions about him when he himself was sitting by, burst forth: "Sir, you have but two topics, yourself and me. I am sick of both. A man should not talk of himself, nor much of any particular person. He should take care not to be made a proverb; and therefore should avoid having any one topic of which people can say, 'We shall hear him upon it.' There was a Dr. Oldfield, who was always talking of the Duke of Marlborough. He came into a coffee-house one day, and told that his Grace had spoken in the House of Lords for half an hour. 'Did he indeed speak for half an hour?' said Belchier, the surgeon.—'Yes,'—'And what did he say of Dr. Oldfield?'—'Nothing.'—'Why, then, Sir, he was very ungrateful; for Dr. Oldfield could not have spoken for a quarter of an hour, without saying something of him.'"

Mark how admirably Johnson carries his anecdotes; the reader always feels that any story is improved by his telling of it.

On Monday, April 29th (1776), the Doctor made an excursion from Bath, where he was then residing with the Thrales, to Bristol -that he might inquire on the spot into the authenticity of "Rowley's Poems," as poor Chatterton had styled his forged verses. Bristol pewterer, who was a zealous believer in the real Rowley, called upon our Author at his inn-sure of securing a proselyte. "I'll make Dr. Johnson a convert," he exclaimed, in the simplicity of his heart, and in pure ignorance, we may presume, of the whole Macpherson-Ossian controversy. The Doctor, at the pewterer's request, read aloud some of Chatterton's verses; the admiring enthusiast standing behind his chair all the while, swaying his body to and fro like a pendulum, making his feet keep time to the Doctor's melodious intonations, and every now and then peering into the reader's face to see if any marks of awakening faith were making their appearance there. But the Doctor's scepticism was not to be shaken by all the power of antique versification. He must see the famous chest itself, then, in which the manuscripts were found; that would convince him, if anything might. The Doctor accordingly laboured up a long stair, panting at every step, till he and his conductor reached the sacred spot

"There," said the honest pewterer, "there is the very chest itself." The force of logic could no further go; and our Author was graciously permitted to retire after this overwhelming proof of the authenticity of the clever productions.

Johnson afterwards said of Chatterton (not to the faithful pewterer, though): "This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things."

CHAPTER XXXI.

A MOMENTOUS NEGOTIATION—THE DOCTOR AND JOHN WILKES—
POLITICS ROUTED BY POLITENESS.

(1776).

SHORTLY after Johnson's return to town, our friend Boswell—always busy—began to concoct a deep and subtle plot which might have resulted in destroying the Doctor's peace of mind effectually.

Of all our Author's political opponents, the one he hated most, and had written against with the greatest fierceness, was John Wilkes, the famous demagogue, who had, some time ago, set the kingdom flaming with pamphlets, libels, satires, and other machinery of political warfare. Of this man the Doctor could never even think but with disgust, or speak but with extreme bitterness. Yet these two-be the consequences what they might-the cunning schemer resolved to bring together: partly from mere curiosity to see the issue, and partly from a real desire to make two famous enemies friends. It was a dangerous experiment: for, although Wilkes was a thoroughly good-humoured fellow, the other was explosive material of the most combustible nature; and the best-tempered man in the world may innocently take a match too near a powder-magazine. Moreover, if this magazine happens to be human, there is always the possibility of self-explosion. Still, the attempt shall be made, and boldly: high Tory and low Radical shall be forced to strike hands like brothers: extremes shall be compelled to meet, and no collision ensue: " if it is only difficult, it is done already—if it is impossible, it shall be done." We must allow Boswell to give an account of his own generalship: he did the deed, let him also tell the story: it is not often that Achilles can be his own Homer.

"My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men, than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had invited me to meet Mr. Wilkes and some other gentlemen, on Wednesday, May 15 (1776). 'Pray,' said I, 'let us have Dr. Johnson.'—'What, with Mr. Wilkes? Not for the world,' said Mr. Edward Dilly; 'Dr. Johnson would never forgive me.'—'Come,' said I, 'if you'll let me negotiate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well.'—DILLY: 'Nay, if you will take it upon you, I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here.'

"Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr. Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded, that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, 'Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?' he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, 'Dine with Jack Wilkes, Sir, I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch.' I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening, took occasion to open my plan thus:—'Mr. Dilly, Sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland.'-Johnson: 'Sir, I am obliged to Mr. Dilly. wait upon him.'-Boswell: 'Provided, Sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have is agreeable to you.'-Johnson: 'What do you mean, Sir? What do you take me for? Do you think that I am so ignorant of the world, as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?'-Boswell: 'I beg your pardon, Sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. he may have some of what he calls his patriotic friends with him.' -Johnson: 'Well, Sir, and what then? What care I for his patriotic friends? Poh!'-Boswell: 'I should not be surprised to find Jack Wilkes there.'-JOHNSON: 'And if Jack Wilkes should be there, what is that to me, Sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but

really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally.'—Boswell: 'Pray forgive me, Sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me.' Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

"Upon the much-expected Wednesday, I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. 'How is this, Sir?' said I. 'Don't you recollect that you are to dine at Mr. Dilly's?'—Johnson: 'Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams.'—Boswell: 'But, my dear Sir, you know you were engaged to Mr. Dilly, and I told him so. He will expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come.'—Johnson: 'You must talk to Mrs. Williams about this.'

"Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured would vet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to show Mrs. Williams such a degree of humane attention, as frequently imposed some restraint upon him; and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened downstairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr. Johnson had engaged to me to dine this day at Mr. Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. 'Yes, Sir,' said she, pretty peevishly, 'Dr. Johnson is to dine at home.'- 'Madam,' said I, 'his respect for you is such, that I know he will not leave you, unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company, I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day; as Mr. Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr. Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him to-day; and then, Madam, be pleased to consider my situation; I carried the message, and I assured Mr. Dilly that Doctor Johnson was to come; and no doubt he has made a dinner, and invited a company, and boasted

of the honour he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there.' She gradually softened to my solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr. Johnson, 'That all things considered, she thought he should certainly go.' I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, 'indifferent in his choice to go or stay;' but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs. Williams's consent, he roared, 'Frank! a clean shirt'—and was very soon drest. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter, who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him, to set out for Gretna Green.

"When we entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. him whispering to Mr. Dilly, 'Who is that gentleman, Sir?'--- 'Mr. Arthur Lee.'-- Johnson: 'Too, too,' (under his breath,) which was one of his habitual mutterings. Mr. Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a patriot but an American. He was afterwards minister from the United States at the Court of Madrid. 'And who is the gentleman in lace?'-' Mr. Wilkes, Sir.' This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book sat down upon a window-seat and read, or ate least kept his eye intently upon it for some time, till he composed His feelings, I dare say, were awkward enough. he no doubt recollected having rated me, for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he therefore resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

"The cheering sound of 'Dinner is upon the table,' dissolved his reverie, and we all sat down without any symptom of ill-humour. Mr. Wilkes placed himself next to Dr. Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness, that he gained upon him insensibly. No man ate more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr. Wilkes

was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. 'Pray give me leave, Sir;—It is better here—A little of the brown—Some fat, Sir—A little of the stuffing—Some gravy—Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter—Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest.'—'Sir, Sir, I am obliged to you, Sir,' cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of 'surly virtue,' but, in a short while, of complacency."

So the impossible has been done, to the everlasting renown of the proud negotiator. Burke afterwards jokingly remarked to Boswell, "There is nothing equal to it in the whole history of the Corps Diplomatique."

After dinner, conversation began. Foote was mentioned.

JOHNSON: "He is not a good mimic." One of the company added, "A merry Andrew, a buffoon."-Johnson: "But he has wit, too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading: he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he has in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, Sir, when you think you have got himlike an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. Garrick is under many erestraints from which Foote is free."-WILKES: "Garrick's wit is more like Lord Chesterfield's."-JOHNSON: 'The first time I was in company with Foote, was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him; but the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, Sir, he was irresistible. He, upon one occasion, experienced, in an extraordinary degree, the efficacy of his powers of enter-Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer. and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers amongst his numerous acquaintance. Fitzherbert was one who

took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid of offending their master, who, they knew, liked Foote much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favourite, to be their deputy, and deliver their remonstrance: and having invested him with the whole authority of the kitchen, he was to inform Mr. Fitzherbert, in all their names, upon a certain day, that they would drink Foote's small-beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Foote's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that when he went down-stairs he told them, 'This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small-beer.'"

Speaking of the difficulty of procuring authentic information for biographical purposes, Johnson said:—

"When I was a young fellow I wanted to write the 'Life of Dryden,' and in order to get materials I applied to the only two persons then alive who had seen him; these were old Swinney and old Cibber. Swinney's information was no more than this, 'That at Will's coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter, and was then called his winter-chair; and it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer-chair.' Cibber could tell no more but 'That he remembered him a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's.' You are to consider that Cibber was then at a great distance from Dryden, had, perhaps, only one leg in the room, and durst not draw in the other."

A gentleman mentioned some Scotch people who had taken possession of a barren part of America, and wondered why they had chosen it.

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, all barrenness is comparative. The Scotch would not know it to be barren."—Boswell: "Come, come, he is flattering the English. You have now been in Scotland, Sir, and say if you did not see meat and drink enough

296

there."—Johnson: "Why, yes, Sir; meat and drink enough to give the inhabitants sufficient strength to run away from home." [Then turning to Mr. Wilkes]: "You must know, Sir, I lately took my friend Boswell, and showed him genuine civilized life in an English provincial town. I turned him loose at Lichfield, my native city, that he might see for once real civility: for you know he lives among savages in Scotland, and among rakes in London."—WILKES: Except when he is with grave, sober, decent people, like you and me."—Johnson (smiling): "And we ashamed of him."

In the course of the evening, Mr. Wilkes jumped up to show the company the good points of a fine print of a beautiful female figure that hung in the room; enlarging most eloquently upon the exquisite contour of the bosom, and running a knowing finger all the while over the lines of it. He afterwards waggishly insisted that our friend the Doctor had, during the whole description, been casting eyes of loving admiration upon the live charms of Mrs. Knowles, a clever Quaker lady, who was one of the guests. And why not? the Doctor is only sixty-seven: and "ran a race in the rain" the other day, "and beat Baretti!"

Thus the evening passed on, with joke and serious talk, and kindly feeling sanctifying both. It is a rich scene, and Johnson has played his part in it like the fine old, sound-hearted, goodnatured fellow he is. The Doctor is perfectly in character throughout. One sees now how false the notion is that Johnson's political Toryism was the strongest force in his being; intellect could master it; good-humour could beat it hollow; humanity could crush it out of sight. Why, even the little politenesses of the dinnertable could almost put it to flight;—"Pray give me leave, Sir;—It is better here—A little of the brown—Some fat, Sir—A little of the stuffing—Some gravy—Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter—Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest."—"Sir, Sir, I am obliged to you, Sir."

CHAPTER XXXII.

DR. BOSWELL'S EPIGRAM—ROUND ROBIN—LETTERS—HOURS OF GLOOM.

(1776—1777.)

A FINE epigrammatic description which Boswell's uncle once gave of Doctor Johnson has kept hovering in our mind for a long while now, and must go down at last: "A robust genius, born to grapple with whole libraries." That is a magnificent sayingperhaps the very best estimate ever made, in as many words, of the intellectual side of our Author's character. It was almost worth the Doctor's while to come into the world only to call forth such a remark from another man. And this is only one instance, chosen from among hundreds, of the sort of life-giving force which streamed from Johnson's mere presence in the midst His influence as a grand massive intellect, of his generation. standing there a mark for all the forces of the finest minds of his time to aim at, can hardly be over-rated: provoking his enemies to do their worst, and constraining his friends to say their bestin either case calling forth power which would otherwise have slumbered for ever. It is not only what he himself did, but also what he indirectly compelled his contemporaries to do, which secures our Author's title to being recognised as the Man of his Time. In a very real sense Samuel Johnson was the intellectual Head-Centre of his age. He heated his enemies and warmed his friends; in both cases troubling the stagnant waters of the intellectual life around. In such troubling there is always a healing virtue at work. Taking the word "wit" in its old and wide signification, the Doctor might with perfect propriety have adopted Falstaff's proud boast and said: "I am not simply witty myself, but the cause that wit is in other men."

"TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

"May 16, 1776.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have been kept away from you, I know not well how, and of those vexatious hindrances I know not when there will be an end. I therefore send you the poor dear Doctor's epitaph. Read it first yourself; and if you then think it right, show it to the Club. I am, you know, willing to be corrected. If you think anything much amiss, keep it to yourself till we come together. I have sent two copies, but prefer the card. The dates must be settled by Dr. Percy.

"I am, Sir,
"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO THE SAME.

" June 22, 1776.

"SIR,

"Miss Reynolds has a mind to send the Epitaph to Dr. Beattie; I am very willing, but having no copy cannot immediately recollect it. She tells me you have lost it. Try to recollect, and put down as much as you retain; you perhaps may have kept what I have dropt. The lines for which I am at a loss are something of rerum civilium sive naturalium. It was a sorry trick to lose it; help me if you can.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,
"Sam. Johnson.

"The gout grows better but slowly."

We give the Epitaph here referred to; partly for its own sake, partly because it gave rise to one of the most interesting of our curiosities of literature, in the shape of a *Round Robin*, which we have also inserted.

"OLIVARII GOLDSMITH,-Poetæ, Physici, Historici, Qui nullum fere scribendi genus Non tetigit, Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit: Sive risus essent movendi, Sive lacrymæ, Affectuum potens at lenis dominator: Ingenio sublimis, vividus, versatilis; Oratione grandis, nitidus, venustus:-Hoc monumento memoriam coluit Sodalium amor, Amicorum fides. Lectorum veneratio. Natus in Hibernia Forniæ Longfordiensis, In loco cui nomen Pallas, Nov. XXIX. MDCCXXXI: Eblanæ literis institutus: Obiit Londini, April IV. MDCCLXXIV."

The Doctor's friends had several objections to this Epitaph—the chief of which was that it had been written in Latin. But who would be bold enough to state these objections to Johnson himself? One day at dinner, in Sir Joshua Reynolds's house, the Round Robin was proposed, as a medium of conveyance which would commit them all in a body, but no one of them in particular. Edmund Burke performed the literary part of the work, and then all the company round signed their names. Sir Joshua agreed to present the awful document.

The Doctor received and read it with great good-humour, only remarking, when he came to Dr. Warton's name, "I wonder that Joe Warton, a scholar by profession, should be such a fool"; and when he came to Burke's, "I should have thought Mund Burke would have had more sense." His final verdict was, that he would alter the Epitaph in any way the gentlemen pleased, as to the sense of it; but "he would never consent to disgrace the walls of Westminster Abbey with an English inscription." And as the bearer of this royal decree Sir Joshua, the ambassador, reverently

took his leave. The Epitaph was engraved on Goldsmith's monument without any alteration.

As these pages will probably be held less sacred than "the walls of Westminster Abbey" an English translation of the inscription may not be thought to profane them.

"To OLIVER GOLDSMITH,-Poet, Naturalist, Historian, Who attempted almost every style, And adorned whatever he touched; Whether to laughter, Or to tears, A mighty yet gentle mover of the passions; In genius, lofty, striking, versatile; In expression, dignified, brilliant, graceful:-This monument is dedicated by The love of his companions, The attachment of his friends, The veneration of his readers. Born in Forney parish, C. Longford, Ireland, At a place called Pallas, Nov. XXIX. MDCCXXXI. Educated at Dublin. Died in London, April IV. MDCCLXXIV."

Johnson has given the date of Goldsmith's birth inaccurately: the poet was born on Nov. 10th, 1728. The mistake, we believe, still remains on the monument.

" DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. BOSWELL.

"May 16, 1776.

" MADAM,

"You must not think me uncivil in omitting to answer the letter with which you favoured me some time ago. I imagined it to have been written without Mr. Boswell's knowledge, and therefore supposed the answer to require, what I could not find, a private conveyance.

"Do not teach the young ones to dislike me, as you dislike me yourself; but let me at least have Veronica's kindness, because she is my acquaintance. "You will now have Mr. Boswell home: it is well that you have him; he has led a wild life. I have taken him to Lichfield, and he has followed Mr. Thrale to Bath. Pray take care of him and tame him. The only thing in which I have the honour to agree with you is, in loving him; and while we are so much of a mind in a matter of so much importance, our other quarrels will, I hope, produce no great bitterness.

"I am, Madam,
"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Some time after this the Doctor, it appears, "purposed to apply vigorously to study, particularly of the Greek and Italian tongues." How seriously—solemnly even—he set about these studies the following will show:—

"July 25, 1776.—O God, who hast ordained that whatever is to be desired should be sought by labour, and who, by thy blessing, bringest honest labour to good effect, look with mercy upon my studies and endeavours. Grant me, O Lord, to design only what is lawful and right; and afford me calmness of mind and steadiness of purpose, that I may so do thy will in this short life as to obtain happiness in the world to come, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

This was part of the Doctor's secret work; but it has become open as day to us—and in the light of it we love the grand old wrestler all the more.

"TO MR. ROBERT LEVETT.

"Brighthelmstone, Oct. 21, 1776.

"DEAR SIR,

"Having spent about six weeks at this place, we have at length resolved upon returning. I expect to see you all in Fleet Street on the 30th of this month.

"I did not go into the sea till last Friday, but think to go most of this week, though I know not that it does me any good. My nights are very restless and tiresome, but I am otherwise well.

"I have written word of my coming to Mrs. Williams. Remember me kindly to Francis and Betsey [his female servant].

"I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,
"Sam. Johnson."

Let it not be supposed that the Doctor only bathed that week—he swam too, and lustily: so lustily, that the man whose mission it was to dip people into the water at Brighton, seeing our old friend of sixty-seven putting forth vigorously to sea, exclaimed, in the excess of his amazement, "You must have been a stouthearted gentleman forty years ago." The dipper was right; the Doctor's heart was always the stoutest thing about him.

"DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL.

" Bolt Court, Nov. 16, 1776.

"DEAR SIR.

- "Do you ever hear from Mr. Langton? I visit him sometimes, but he does not talk. I do not like his scheme of life; but as I am not permitted to understand it, I cannot set anything right that is wrong. His children are sweet babies.
- "I hope my irreconcilable enemy, Mrs. Boswell, is well. Desire her not to transmit her malevolence to the young people. Let me have Alexander, and Veronica, and Euphemia for my friends.
- "Mrs. Williams, whom you may reckon as one of your well-wishers, is in a feeble and languishing state, with little hopes of growing better. She went for some part of the autumn into the country, but is little benefited; and Dr. Lawrence confesses that his art is at an end. Death is, however, at a distance: and what more than that can we say of ourselves? I am sorry for her pain, and more sorry for her decay. Mr. Levett is sound, wind and limb.
- "I was some weeks this autumn at Brighthelmstone. The place was very dull, and I was not well; the expedition to the Hebrides was the most pleasant journey that I ever made. Such an effort annually would give the world a little diversification."

" DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL.

" Feb. 18, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is so long since I heard anything from you, that I am not easy about it; write something to me next post.

"Poor Beauclerk still continues very ill. Langton lives on as he used to do. His children are very pretty, and, I think, his lady loses her Scotch. Paoli I never see.

"I have been so distressed by difficulty of breathing, that I lost, as was computed, six-and-thirty ounces of blood in a few days. I am better, but not well.

"Mrs. Williams sends her compliments, and promises that when you come hither she will accommodate you as well as ever she can in the old room. She wishes to know whether you sent her book to Sir Alexander Gordon.

"My dear Boswell, do not neglect to write to me: for your kindness is one of the pleasures of my life, which I should be sorry to lose."

"BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON,

" Edinburgh, Feb. 24, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"Your letter, dated the 18th instant, I had the pleasure to receive last post. Although my late long neglect, or rather delay, was truly culpable, I am tempted not to regret it, since it has produced me so valuable a proof of your regard. I did, indeed, during that inexcusable silence, sometimes divert the reproaches of my own mind, by fancying that I should hear again from you, inquiring with some anxiety about me, because, for aught you know, I might have been ill.

"You are pleased to show me that my kindness is of some consequence to you. My heart is elated at the thought. Be assured, my dear Sir, that my affection and reverence for you are exalted and steady. I do not believe that a more perfect attachment ever existed in the history of mankind. And it is a noble attachment; for the attractions are Genius, Learning, and Piety.

304 MRS. BOSWELL MAKES ATONEMENT.

"Your difficulty of breathing alarms me, and brings into my imagination an event which, although in the natural course of things I must expect at some period, I cannot view with composure.

"My wife is much honoured by what you say of her. She begs you may accept of her best compliments. She is to send you some marmalade of oranges of her own making."

Our readers will be happy to have found that Mrs. Boswell is at last making sweet atonement for all unkindness; the Doctor's future banter will all taste of marmalade.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" March 14, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have been much pleased with your late letter, and am glad that my old enemy, Mrs. Boswell, begins to feel some remorse. As to Miss Veronica's Scotch, I think it cannot be helped. An English maid you might easily have; but she would still imitate the greater number, as they would be likewise those whom she must most respect. Her dialect will not be gross. Her mamma has not much Scotch, and you have yourself very little. I hope she knows my name, and does not call me Johnston.

"It is proposed to augment our club from twenty to thirty, of which I am glad; for as we have several in it whom I do not much like to consort with, I am for reducing it to a mere miscellaneous collection of conspicuous men, without any determinate character * * * *

"I am, dear Sir,
"Most affectionately yours,
"SAM. JOHNSON.

"My respects to Madam, to Veronica, to Alexander, to Euphemia, to David."

This proposal to increase the membership of the Club had been made to Johnson years before by Goldsmith, on the ground that there was need of variety, the members having "travelled over one another's minds." The Doctor had replied, somewhat angrily, "Sir, you have not travelled over my mind, I promise you." But he had now come to think that there might be some truth in Goldsmith's remark.

"TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"Glasgow, April 24, 1777.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Our worthy friend Thrale's death having appeared in the newspapers, and been afterwards contradicted, I have been placed in a state of very uneasy uncertainty, from which I hoped to be relieved by you: but my hopes have as yet been vain. How could you omit to write to me on such an occasion? I shall wait with anxiety.

"Pray tell me about this edition of 'The English Poets, with a preface, biographical and critical, to each author, by Samuel Johnson, LL.D.' which I see advertised. I am delighted with the prospect of it. Indeed I am happy to feel that I am capable of being so much delighted with literature. But is not the charm of this publication chiefly owing to the magnum nomen in the front of it?

"What do you say of Lord Chesterfield's Memoirs and Last Letters?

"My wife has made marmalade of oranges for you. I left her and my daughters and Alexander all well yesterday. I have taught Veronica to speak of you thus:—Dr. Johnson, not Johnston.

"I remain, my dear Sir,
"Your most affectionate
"And obliged humble servant,
"JAMES BOSWELL."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" May 3, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"The story of Mr. Thrale's death, as he had neither been sick nor in any other danger, made so little impression upon me,

that I never thought about obviating its effects on anybody else. It is supposed to have been produced by the English custom of making April fools; that is, of sending one another on some foolish errand on the 1st of April.

"Tell Mrs. Boswell that I shall taste her marmalade cautiously at first. Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes. 'Beware,' says the Italian proverb, 'of a reconciled enemy.' But when I find it does me no harm, I shall then receive it, and be thankful for it, as a pledge of firm, and, I hope, of unalterable kindness. She is, after all, a dear, dear lady.

"Please to return Dr. Blair thanks for his sermons. The Scotch write English wonderfully well.

"My health is very bad, and my nights are very unquiet. What can I do to mend them? I have for this summer nothing better in prospect than a journey into Staffordshire and Derbyshire, perhaps with Oxford and Birmingham in my way.

"Make my compliments to Miss Veronica; I must leave it to her philosophy to comfort you for the loss of little David. You must remember, that to keep three out of four is more than your share. Mrs. Thrale has but four out of eleven.

"I am engaged to write little Lives, and little Prefaces, to a little edition of 'The English Poets.' I think I have persuaded the booksellers to insert something of Thomson; and if you could give me some information about him, for the life which we have is very scanty, I should be glad.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate humble servant, "Sam. Johnson."

Letters such as those last quoted represent the sunny hours of our Author's life, at this period; but, in fearful contrast to these there were hours of gloom also just then, which have pictured themselves in no letters, though they forced their way into the old man's "Prayers and Meditations":—"When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body, and disturbances of the mind, very near to

madness, which I hope He that made me will suffer to extenuate many faults, and excuse many deficiencies."

And again, on Easter-day, the following:-" Almighty and most merciful Father, who seest all our miseries, and knowest all our necessities, look down upon me, and pity me. Defend me from the violent incursion of evil thoughts, and enable me to form and keep such resolutions as may conduce to the discharge of the duties which thy providence shall appoint me; and so help me, by thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, and that I may serve thee with a pure affection and a cheerful mind. Have mercy upon me; O God, have mercy upon me; years and infirmities oppress me, terror and anxiety beset me. Have mercy upon me, my Creator and my Judge. In all perplexities relieve and free me; and so help me by thy Holy Spirit, that I may now so commemorate the death of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, as that when this short and painful life shall have an end, I may, for his sake, be received to everlasting happiness. Amen."

Afterwards, at church, renovation comes:—"I was for some time distressed, but at last obtained, I hope from the God of Peace, more quiet than I have enjoyed for a long time. I had made no resolution, but as my heart grew lighter, my hopes revived, and my courage increased; and I wrote with my pencil in my Common Prayer Book.

'Vita ordinanda.

Biblia legenda.

Theologiæ opera danda.

Serviendum et lætandum.''"

It is fortunate for us that we have not taken in hand to classify our hero's life; for a life with so many eruptive forces working in and through it, stubbornly refuses to run nicely into any little mould. Life laughs at logic; and to insist upon looking at a great original man only through the eyes of some little philosophic system is simply to deny that the man is original at all. "Surely the only true knowledge of our fellow-man is that which enables us

HOURS OF GLOOM.

to feel with him—which gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of circumstance and opinion. Our subtlest analysis of schools and sects must miss the essential truth, unless it be lit up by the love that sees in all forms of human thought and work, the life-and-death struggles of separate human beings."

308

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DR. JOHNSON AND DR. DODD-LETTERS-PROPOSED "LITTLE ADVENTURE."

(1777.)

In the summer of this year Johnson wrote one prologue and was lauded in another. His own was spoken before Hugh Kelly's comedy, "A Word to the Wise;" that in which he himself was complimented was composed by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the son of the man whom the doctor had unfortunately offended beyond forgiveness. This last was spoken before "Sir Thomas Overbury," a tragedy by Johnson's old companion of unhappy memory, Richard Savage. The closing lines, in which delicate reference is made to our Author's Life of his poor friend, and to the Dictionary, are these:-

> " So pleads THE TALE that gives to future times The son's misfortunes and the parent's crimes; There shall his fame (if own'd to-night) survive, Fix'd by the hand that bids our language live."

Young Sheridan was afterwards elected a member of the Literary Club, having been proposed by the Doctor, on this ground: "He who has written the two best comedies of his age, is surely a considerable man." The comedies referred to are "The Rivals," published in 1775, and "The School for Scandal," published in 1777. In doing the son this honour, Johnson may have meant also to pay an indirect compliment to the father; for we now know the Doctor's peculiar way of begging a man's pardon.

But the Doctor's grandest summer work was something infinitely finer than any prologue to any comedy, and the praise due to it could not have been fitly spoken before any mere stage-tragedy. It

was a great act of mercy; and is one of the most interesting scenes in a very real tragedy that was performed in London about that time.

The Rev. William Dodd, a very popular preacher, a zealous promoter of charitable institutions, and the author of a number of works in theological literature, had nevertheless contracted some vicious habits ill suited to his solemn office. To make up the deficit which licence and luxury had made in his income, he. in an evil hour, forged a bill upon the Earl of Chesterfield, whose tutor he had once been, and who, he probably flattered himself, would step in between him and ruin when he saw that the fatal error had been committed. But these hopes, if he had them, were doomed to be blasted; the Earl allowed the law to take its course, and that course meant death to the forger. Knowing our Author's force of mind, and believing in his goodness of heart, the wretched criminal had recourse to him in his hour of need. and wrote him a letter imploring him to use his power of language and persuasion in craving the Royal Mercy. Johnson read the letter, walking up and down his room in great agitation, and having finished it, said, "I will do what I can." And he kept his word. He wrote Dr. Dodd's "Speech to the Recorder," at the Old Bailey, when sentence of death was about to be pro-He also wrote "The Convict's Address to his Unnounced. happy Brethren," a sermon delivered by the condemned man to his fellow-prisoners in the chapel of Newgate.

"DR. DODD TO DR. JOHNSON.

" May 23, 1777.

"I am so penetrated, my ever dear Sir, with a sense of your extreme benevolence towards me, that I cannot find words equal to the sentiments of my heart.

"You are too conversant in the world to need the slightest hint from me, of what infinite utility the Speech on the awful day has been to me. I experience every hour some good effect from it. I am sure that effects still more salutary and important must follow from your kind and intended favour. I will labour—God being my helper—to do justice to it from the pulpit. I am sure,

had I your sentiments constantly to deliver from thence, in all their mighty force and power, not a soul could be left unconvinced and unpersuaded."

He added: "May God Almighty bless and reward, with his choicest comforts, your philanthropic actions, and enable me at all times to express what I feel of the high and uncommon obligation which I owe to the *first man* in our times."

"DR. DODD TO DR. JOHNSON.

" Sunday, June 22.

"If his Majesty would be pleased of his royal clemency to spare me and my family the horrors and ignominy of a *public death*, which the *public* itself is solicitous to waive, and to grant me in some silent distant corner of the globe to pass the remainder of my days in penitence and prayer, I would bless his clemency and be humbled."

Johnson received this letter in church; he stooped down and read it there; and, immediately on reaching home, wrote, in Dodd's name, the following petition to the King:—

"SIR,

"May it not offend your Majesty, that the most miserable of men applies himself to your clemency, as his last hope and his last refuge; that your mercy is most earnestly and humbly implored by a clergyman, whom your Laws and Judges have condemned to the horror and ignominy of a public execution.

"I confess the crime, and own the enormity of its consequences, and the danger of its example. Nor have I the confidence to petition for impunity; but humbly hope, that public security may be established without the spectacle of a clergyman dragged through the streets to a death of infamy, amidst the derision of the profligate and profane; and that justice may be satisfied with irrevocable exile, perpetual disgrace, and hopeless penury.

"My life, Sir, has not been useless to mankind. I have benefited many. But my offences against God are numberless, and I have had little time for repentance. Preserve me, Sir, by your

prerogative of mercy, from the necessity of appearing unprepared at that tribunal, before which kings and subjects must stand at last together. Permit me to hide my guilt in some obscure corner of a foreign country, where, if I can ever attain confidence to hope that my prayers will be heard, they shall be poured with all the fervour of gratitude for the life and happiness of your Majesty.

"I am, Sir,

"Your Majesty's &c."

Subjoined was the following note:-

"TO DR. DODD.

"SIR,

"I most seriously enjoin you not to let it be at all known that I have written this letter, and to return the copy to Mr. Allen in a cover to me. I hope I need not tell you, that I wish it success. But do not indulge hope.—Tell nobody."

Our Author also wrote a petition from Mrs. Dodd to the Queen; several other supplicatory letters to men of influence; and some observations in the newspapers upon a petition signed by 20,000 persons, and presented to the King by Earl Percy. But no entreaties could avail, and the unhappy man must prepare to meet his doom.

"June 25, midnight.

"Accept, thou great and good heart, my earnest and fervent prayers for all thy benevolent and kind efforts in my behalf.—Oh, Dr. Johnson! as I sought your knowledge at an early hour in life, would to heaven I had cultivated the love and acquaintance of so excellent a man!—I pray God most sincerely to bless you with the highest transports—the infelt satisfaction of humane and benevolent exertions!—And admitted, as I trust I shall be, to the realms of bliss before you, I shall hail your arrival there with transports, and rejoice to acknowledge that you were my Comforter, my Advocate, and my Friend! God be ever with you!"

On the day before the exection Johnson wrote the following noble letter, as solemn as it is consolatory:—

"TO THE REVEREND DR. DODD.

" June 26, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"That which is appointed to all men is now coming upon you. Outward circumstances, the eyes and the thoughts of men, are below the notice of an immortal being about to stand the trial for eternity, before the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth. Be comforted: your crime, morally or religiously considered, has no very deep dye of turpitude. It corrupted no man's principles; it attacked no man's life. It involved only a temporary and repairable injury. Of this, and of all other sins, you are earnestly to repent; and may God, who knoweth our frailty, and desireth not our death, accept your repentance, for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

"In requital of those well-intended offices which you are pleased so emphatically to acknowledge, let me beg that you make in your devotions one petition for my eternal welfare.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate servant, "Sam. Johnson."

There may be many opinions about Dr. Dodd's claim to the Royal Mercy, but there can be only one about Dr. Johnson's high-souled attempt to procure it. Our Author's final reflections upon the miserable man's career are well worth quoting:--"For his reputation, which no man can give to himself, those who conferred it are to answer. Of his public ministry the means of judging were sufficiently attainable. He must be allowed to preach well, whose sermons strike his audience with forcible conviction. Of his life, those who thought it consistent with his doctrine did not originally form false notions. He was at first what he endeavoured to make others; but the world broke down his resolution, and he in time ceased to exemplify his own instructions. Let those who are tempted to his faults tremble at his punishment; and those whom he impressed from the pulpit with religious sentiments endeavour to confirm them, by considering the regret and self-abhorrence with which he reviewed in prison his deviations from rectitude."

"DR. JOHNSON TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ.

" June 29, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have lately been much disordered by a difficulty of breathing, but am now better. I hope your house is well.

"You know we have been talking lately of St. Cross, at Winchester; I have an old acquaintance whose distress makes him very desirous of an hospital, and I am afraid I have not strength enough to get him into the Chartreux. He is a painter, who never rose higher than to get his immediate living, and from that, at eighty-three, he is disabled by a slight stroke of the palsy, such as does not make him at all helpless on common occasions, though his hand is not steady enough for his art.

"My request is, that you will try to obtain a promise of the next vacancy from the Bishop of Chester. It is not a great thing to ask, and I hope we shall obtain it. Dr. Warton has promised to favour him with his notice, and I hope he may end his days in peace.

"I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO THE REVEREND DR. VYSE, AT LAMBETH.

" July 9, 1777.

"Sir,

"I doubt not but you will readily forgive me for taking the liberty of requesting your assistance in recommending an old friend to his Grace the Archbishop as Governor of the Charterhouse.

"His name is De Groot; he was born at Gloucester. I have known him many years. He has all the common claims to charity, being old, poor, and infirm in a great degree. He has likewise another claim, to which no scholar can refuse attention; he is by several descents the nephew of Hugo Grotius; of him, from whom perhaps every man of learning has learnt something. Let it not be said that in any lettered country a nephew of Grotius asked a charity and was refused.

"I am, Reverend Sir,
"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" July 22, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"Your notion of the necessity of an early interview is very pleasing to both my vanity and tenderness. I shall, perhaps, come to Carlisle another year; but my money has not held out so well as it used to do. I shall go to Ashbourne, and I purpose to make Dr. Taylor invite you. If you live awhile with me at his house, we shall have much time to ourselves, and our stay will be no expense to us or him. I shall leave London the 28th; and, after some stay at Oxford and Lichfield, shall probably come to Ashbourne about the end of your Session; but of all this you shall have notice. Be satisfied we will meet somewhere.

"I have dined lately with poor dear ——. I do not think he goes on well. His table is rather coarse, and he has his children too much about him. But he is a very good man.

"Mrs. Williams is in the country, to try if she can improve her health; she is very ill. Matters have come so about, that she is in the country with very good accommodation; but age, and sickness, and pride, have made her so peevish, that I was forced to bribe the maid to stay with her, by a secret stipulation of half-a-crown a-week over her wages.

"Our Club ended its session about six weeks ago. We now only meet to dine once a fortnight. Mr. Dunning, the great lawyer, is one of our members. The Thrales are well."

Mark the Doctor's tenderness—womanly tenderness—to poor old peevish Mrs. Williams: "forced to bribe the maid to stay with her by a secret stipulation of half-a-crown a-week." This man always strove to be the more when those who were bound to him became the less.

"DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. BOSWELL.

" July 22, 1777.

" MADAM,

"Though I am well enough pleased with the taste of sweetmeats, very little of the pleasure which I received at the arrival of your jar of marmalade arose from eating it. I received it as a token of friendship, as a proof of reconciliation, things much sweeter than sweetmeats, and upon this consideration I return you, dear Madam, my sincerest thanks. By having your kindness I think I have a double security for the continuance of Mr. Boswell's, which it is not to be expected that any man can long keep, when the influence of a lady so highly and so justly valued operates against him. Mr. Boswell will tell you that I was always faithful to your interest, and always endeavoured to exalt you in his estimation. You must now do the same for me. We must all help one another, and you must now consider me as, dear Madam,

"Your most obliged and most humble servant, "Sam. Johnson."

The reconciliation is now perfect: the marmalade has filled the breach.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" Aug. 30, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am this day come to Ashbourne, and have only to tell you, that Dr. Taylor says you shall be welcome to him, and you know how welcome you will be to me. Make haste to let me know when you may be expected.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, and tell her I hope we shall be at variance no more.

"I am, dear Sir,
"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"Ashbourne, Sept. 1, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"On Saturday I wrote a very short letter, immediately upon my arrival hither, to show you that I am not less desirous of the interview than yourself. Life admits not of delays; when pleasure can be had it is fit to catch it: every hour takes away part of the things that please us, and perhaps part of our disposition to be pleased. When I came to Lichfield, I found my old friend Harry Jackson dead. It was a loss, and a loss not to be repaired, as he was one of the companions of my childhood. I hope we may long continue to gain friends; but the friends which merit or usefulness can procure us are not able to supply the place of old acquaintance, with whom the days of youth may be retraced, and those images revived which gave the earliest delight. If you and I live to be much older, we shall take great delight in talking over the Hebridean Journey.

"In the mean time it may not be amiss to contrive some other little adventure, but what it can be I know not; leave it, as Sidney says,

'To virtue, fortune, time, and woman's breast;'

for I believe Mrs. Boswell must have some part in the consultation.

"One thing you will like. The Doctor, so far as I can judge, is likely to leave us enough to ourselves. He was out to-day before I came down, and, I fancy, will stay out to dinner. I have brought the papers about poor Dodd, to show you, but you will soon have despatched them.

"Before I came away, I sent poor Mrs. Williams into the country, very ill of a pituitous defluxion, which wastes her gradually away, and which her physician declares himself unable to stop. I supplied her, as far as could be desired, with all conveniences to make her excursion and abode pleasant and useful. But I am afraid she can only linger a short time in a morbid state of weakness and pain.

"The Thrales, little and great, are all well, and purpose to go to Brighthelmstone at Michaelmas. They will invite me to go with them, and perhaps I may go, but I hardly think I shall like to stay the whole time; but of futurity we know but little.

"Mrs. Porter is well; but Mrs. Aston, one of the ladies at Stowhill, has been struck with a palsy, from which she is

not likely ever to recover. How soon may such a stroke fall upon us!

"Write to me, and let us know when we may expect you.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most humble servant,
"Sam. Johnson."

"Some other little adventure!" Boswell had, some years ago, proposed an expedition to the Baltic; and the Doctor's mind was still actually running upon that, as appears from the following to Mrs. Thrale:

" Ashbourne, Sept. 13, 1777.

"Boswell, I believe, is coming. He talks of being here to-day. I shall be glad to see him; but he shrinks from the Baltic expedition, which, I think, is the best scheme in our power. What we shall substitute, I know not. He wants to see Wales; but, except the woods of *Bachycraigh*, what is there in Wales that can fill the hunger of ignorance, or quench the thirst of curiosity? We may, perhaps, form some scheme or other; but in the phrase of 'Hockley in the Hole,' it is pity he has not a better bottom."

That would have been a "little adventure" indeed for a gentleman close upon his seventy-eighth year! But one is constantly made to feel that this man ought to have lasted for ever; and would—but for that sorry "physical basis of life," upon which no eternal superstructure can be reared.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

VISIT TO ASHBOURNE—TWO DOCTORS—CONVERSATIONS—
JOHNSON'S BIRTHDAY.

(1777.)

AFTER passing some time at Oxford and Lichfield, Johnson had arrived at Ashbourne, the residence of his old schoolfellow, the Rev. Dr. Taylor, on the 30th of August, and he remained there till well on in November. Boswell arrived a fortnight later.

Though the two Doctors differed in many important respects, their regard for each other seems to have been very real of its kind. Still, they were wont to express themselves pretty freely of one another when time and place agreed. Of Taylor the Doctor would say: "Sir, I love him; but I do not love him more; my regard for him does not increase. As it is said in the Apocrypha, 'his talk is of bullocks.' I do not suppose he is very fond of my company. His habits are by no means sufficiently clerical; this he knows that I see; and no man likes to live under the eye of perpetual disapprobation." It is shrewdly suspected, moreover, that some of the reverend gentleman's sermons were written by our Author; at all events, Johnson's diary takes note of one-" Concio pro Tayloro." Of the Doctor, on the other hand, Taylor would say: "He is a man of a very clear head, great power of words, and a very gay imagination; but there is no disputing with He will not hear you, and, having a louder voice than you, must roar you down." But if Taylor's talk was only "of bullocks," what more fitting reply than a good round roar? The truth is, the Reverend Doctor bored the Literary Doctor, and Johnson was much better pleased when his friend happened to be from home than when he was at full liberty to bestow all his tediousness upon his guest. This monotony was occasionally relieved, however, by

some good conversation-parties and several pleasant excursions to neighbouring places of interest. Those gentlemen whom Taylor gathered together to do honour to his great friend were not all frightened; though it did happen, now and then, that some timid mortal, struck more by the Doctor's strong voice and strange manner than by anything more inward, would leave the formidable presence, exclaiming, "He's a tremendous companion."

This must have been the verdict of a gentleman-farmer who, one evening, desperately attempted to defend an English yeoman, Mungo Campbell by name, who had shot the Earl of Eglintoune, under circumstances which it is unnecessary to detail. farmer, "I should have done just as Campbell did."-Johnson: "Whoever would do as Campbell did deserves to be hanged; not that I could, as a juryman, have found him legally guilty of murder; but I am glad they found means to convict him." The gentleman-farmer retorted, "A poor man has as much honour as a rich man, and Campbell had that to defend." Johnson exclaimed, "A poor man has no honour." The English yeoman, undismayed, proceeded: "Lord Eglintoune was a damned fool to run on upon Campbell, after being warned that Campbell would shoot him if he did." Johnson, who could not bear anything like swearing, angrily replied, "He was not a damned fool: he only thought too well of Campbell. He did not believe Campbell would be such a damned scoundrel, as to do so damned a thing." This was the Doctor's way of rebuking the practice of profane swearing; and it was a thoroughly characteristic way.

On another evening, however, this gentleman was more fortunate in his endeavours to entertain our Author. He and two others treated themselves and the company to a whole host of tunes on the violin: Johnson was pleased to encore "Let ambition fire thy mind," this tune having struck his fancy in some mysterious manner—mysterious, for the Doctor was, by his own confession, entirely devoid of a musical sense.

Boswell [on the above evening]: "Music affects me to such a degree as often to agitate my nerves painfully, producing in my mind alternate sensations of pathetic dejection, so that I am ready to shed tears; and of daring resolution, so that I am inclined to rush

into the thickest part of the battle." "Sir," said Johnson, "I should never hear it if it made me such a fool." Nevertheless, there is at least one other instance on record of the Doctor's having been moved, not unpleasantly, by sweet sounds. He was observed listening very attentively one evening while Miss Thrale played on the harpsichord, and at last, under some impulse inexplicable even to himself, he burst out, "Why don't you dash away like Burney?" Whereupon Burney remarked, "I believe, Sir, we shall make a musician of you at last." Johnson very honestly replied, "I shall be glad to have a new sense given to me."

If this somewhat lengthy visit to his old schoolfellow did not prove, on the whole, quite so lively as the Doctor could have desired, our readers, we imagine, will have no reason to c mplain of its dullness, when we shall have set before them the best bits of talk and the richest incidents which the three months embraced.

Boswell expressed his disappointment that the edition of the English Poets, for which Johnson was to write Prefaces and Lives, was not an undertaking directed by him; but that he was to furnish a Preface and Life to any poet the booksellers pleased. He inquired if the Doctor would do this to any dunce's works, if they asked him. Johnson: "Yes, Sir; and say he was a dunce."

Dr. Taylor's nose happening to bleed, he said it was because he had omitted to have himself blooded four days after a quarter of a year's interval. Dr. Johnson, who was a great dabbler in physic, disapproved much of periodical bleeding. "I do not like to take an emetic," said Taylor, "for fear of breaking some small vessels." "Poh!" said Johnson, "if you have so many things that will break, you had better break your neck at once, and there's an end on't. You will break no small vessels" (blowing with high derision).

Johnson observed that a gentleman of eminence in literature had got into a bad style of poetry of late. "He puts," said he, "a very common thing in a strange dress till he does not know it himself, and thinks other people do not know it."—Boswell: "That is owing to his being so much versant in old English poetry."—Johnson: "What is that to the purpose, Sir? If I say a man is drunk, and you tell me it is owing to his taking much drink, the matter is not mended. No, Sir, —— has taken to an odd mode. For example, he'd write thus:—

'Hermit hoar, in solemn cell, Wearing out life's evening grey.'

Grey evening is common enough; but evening grey he'd think fine. Stay—we'll make out the stanza:—

'Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,
Wearing out life's evening grey,
Smite thy bosom, sage, and tell,
What is bliss, and which the way?'"

BOSWELL: "But why smite his bosom, Sir?"—JOHNSON (smiling): "Why, to show he was in earnest."—He afterwards added the following stanza:—

"Thus I spoke; and speaking sigh'd, Scarce repressed the starting tear; When the smiling sage replied— Come, my lad, and drink some beer."

Speaking of the splendid seat of Lord Scarsdale, which they were then visiting, Boswell remarked, "One should think that the proprietor of all this must be happy." "Nay, Sir," said Johnson, "all this excludes but one evil—poverty." When the Doctor's retort was afterwards repeated to a certain lady, she was ready with one quite as good: "It is true," she said, "all this excludes only one evil; but how much good does it let in?"

Johnson again expressed his love of driving fast in a post-chaise. "If," said he, "I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman: but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation."

What had our dear Doctor not observed with those quick, short-sighted eyes of his?—"Sir, of a thousand shavers, two do not shave so much alike as not to be distinguished."

Of Goldsmith he said: "Goldsmith was a plant that flowered late. There appeared nothing remarkable about him when he was young; though when he got high in fame, one of his friends began to recollect something of his being distinguished at college. Goldsmith in the same manner recollected more of that friend's early years, as he grew a greater man."

The Doctor abominated puns; but he actually perpetrated one about this period, which must be given, if not for its worth, at least for its rarity:—

JOHNSON: "A man should take a sufficient quantity of sleep, which Dr. Mead says is between seven and nine hours."—Boswell: "Dr. Cullen said to me, that a man should not take more sleep than he can take at once."—JOHNSON: "This rule, Sir, cannot hold in all cases; for many people have their sleep broken by sickness; and surely Cullen would not have a man to get up, after having slept but an hour. Such a regimen would soon end in a long sleep."

Johnson had grand fun, one evening, over an article in the "Critical Review" of this year, giving an account of a curious publication, entitled "A Spiritual Diary and Soliloquies, by John Rutty, M.D." Dr. Rutty was a Quaker, and his Diary extended from 1753 to 1775. The reviewer gave the following specimens:—

- "Tenth month, 1753.
- "23. Indulgence in bed an hour too long.
- "Twelfth month, 17. An hypochondriac obnubilation from wind and indigestion.
 - "Ninth month, 28. An overdose of whisky.
 - "29. A dull, cross, choleric day.
- "First month, 1757.—22. A little swinish at dinner and repast.
 - "31. Dogged on provocation.
 - "Second month, 5. Very dogged or snappish.
 - "14. Snappish on fasting.
- "26. Cursed snappishness to those under me, on a bodily indisposition.

- "Third month, 11. On a provocation, exercised a dull resentment for two days instead of scolding.
 - " 22. Scolded too vehemently.
 - "23. Dogged again.
 - "Fourth month, 29. Mechanically and sinfully dogged."

The Doctor laughed loudest at the points which he felt touched himself: "A little swinish at dinner and repast;" "Dogged on pro-tocation;" "Dogged again."

JOHNSON: "A madman loves to be with people whom he fears; not as a dog fears the lash; but of whom he stands in awe." A very profound saying.

Boswell expressed himself pleased with Forster's "Voyage to the South Seas":—

JOHNSON: "There is a great affectation of fine writing in it."

—Boswell: "But he carries you along with him."—Johnson:
"No, Sir; he does not carry me along with him; he leaves me behind him; or, rather, indeed, he sets me before him, for he makes me turn over many leaves at a time!"

JOHNSON: "Did we not hear so much said of Jack Wilkes, we should think more highly of his conversation. Jack has a great variety of talk; Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman. But after hearing his name sounded from pole to pole, as the phœnix of convivial felicity, we are disappointed in his company. He has always been at me: but I would do Jack a kindness rather than not. The contest is now over."

JOHNSON: "Colley Cibber once consulted me as to one of his birth-day Odes, a long time before it was wanted. I objected very freely to several passages. Cibber lost patience, and would not read his ode to an end. When we had done with criticism, we walked over to Richardson's, the author of 'Clarissa,' and I wondered to find Richardson displeased that I 'did not treat Cibber with more respect.' Now, Sir (smiling disdainfully), to talk of respect for a player!"—Boswell: "There, Sir, you are always heretical; you never will allow merit to a player."—JOHNSON "Merit, Sir; what merit? Do you respect a rope-

dancer, or a ballad-singer?"-Boswell: "No, Sir; but we respect a great player, as a man who can conceive lofty sentiments, and can express them gracefully."-Johnson: "What, Sir, a fellow who claps a hump on his back, and a lump on his leg, and cries, 'I am Richard the Third'? Nay, Sir, a balladsinger is a higher man, for he does two things: he repeats and he There is both recitation and music in his performance: the player only recites."—Boswell: "My dear Sir, you may turn anything into ridicule. I allow that a player of farce is not entitled to respect; he does a little thing: but he who can represent exalted characters, and touch the noblest passions, has very respectable powers; and mankind have agreed in admiring great talents for the stage. We must consider, too, that a great player does what very few people are capable to do: his art is a very rare faculty. Who can repeat Hamlet's soliloquy, 'To be, or not to be,' as Garrick does it?"-Johnson: "Anybody may. Jemmy there (a boy about eight years old, who was in the room) would do it as well in a week."—Boswell: "No, no, Sir; and as a proof of the merit of great acting, and of the value which mankind set upon it, Garrick has got 100,000/."-JOHNSON: "Is getting 100,000/. a proof of excellence? That has been done by a scoundrel commissary."

On the whole, the Doctor's sober conviction about acting seems to have been that it was only a more or less successful attempt at "making faces." Dr. Burney, having once remarked that Garrick was beginning to look old, Johnson said, "Why, Sir, you are not to wonder at that; no man's face has had more wear ond tear." And, on another occasion, he asked Kemble, "Are you, Sir, one of those enthusiasts who believe yourself transformed into the very character you represent?" Upon Mr. Kemble's answering that he had never felt so strong a persuasion himself: "To be sure not, Sir," said Johnson, "the thing is impossible. And if Garrick really believed himself to be that monster Richard the Third, he deserved to be hanged every time he performed it."

One day at breakfast, Boswell said to Johnson, "I wish I saw you and Mrs. Macaulay together." The Doctor grew very angry;

and, after a pause, while a cloud gathered on his brow, he burst out, "No, Sir, you would not see us quarrel to make you sport. Don't you know that it is very uncivil to pit two people against one another?" Then, checking himself, and wishing to be more gentle, he added, "I do not say you should be hanged or drowned for this: but it is very uncivil." Boswell afterwards acknowledged himself to blame, but candidly owned that he did wish to see a contest between these two-because he was sure the Doctor would prove victorious. Johnson: "Sir, you cannot be sure how a contest will end; and no man has a right to engage two people in a dispute by which their passions may be inflamed, and they may part with bitter resentment against each other. I would sooner keep company with a man from whom I must guard my pockets, than with a man who contrives to bring me into a dispute with somebody that he may hear it. is the great fault of - (naming one of his friends), endeavouring to introduce a subject upon which he knows two people in the company differ."-Boswell: "But he told me, Sir, he does it for instruction."-JOHNSON: "Whatever the motive be, Sir, the man who does so, does very wrong. has no more right to instruct himself at such risk, than he has to make two people fight a duel, that he may learn how to defend himself."

"I do not know for certain," said Mrs. Thrale, on one occasion, "what will please Dr. Johnson: but I know for certain that it will displease him to praise anything, even what he likes, extravagantly." Taylor, who had a habit of praising to excess all his own possessions, came into collision with this characteristic of the Doctor's, when enlarging, one evening, on the excellence of his bull-dog, which, he told the company, was "perfectly well shaped." Johnson immediately set about a close examination of the belauded brute, and then pronounced sentence upon it thus: "No, Sir, he is not well shaped; for there is not the quick transition from the thickness of the fore-part to the tenuity—the thin part—behind, which a bull-dog ought to have." Taylor then argued that a small bull-dog was as good as a large one. "No,

Sir," said Johnson, "for, in proportion to his size, he has strength; and your argument would prove that a bull-dog may be as small as a mouse."

Good talk means with Johnson good fighting: a debate, in the strictest sense of the word, he must always have; and to be beaten in conversation is to be irretrievably disgraced. Edmund Burke was perhaps the only man he ever acknowledged as a real opponent in this kind of warfare. Once, when the Doctor was ill, and unable to exert himself as usual, except to his own hurt, somebody mentioned Burke's name. "That fellow," says the weary warrior, "calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now it would kill me."

"Misery" was spoken of as being the "doom of man."

BOSWELL: "Yet things are done upon the supposition of happiness; grand houses are built, fine gardens are made, splendid places of public amusement are contrived, and crowded with company."—Johnson: "Alas, Sir, these are all only struggles for happiness. When I first entered Ranelagh, it gave an expansion and gay sensation to my mind, such as I never experienced anywhere else. But, as Xerxes wept when he viewed his immense army, and considered that not one of that great multitude would be alive a hundred years afterwards, so it went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle that was not afraid to go home and think; but that the thoughts of each individual there would be distressing when alone."

On Wednesday evening, September 17, Johnson proposed that the crystal lustre in Dr. Taylor's large room should be lighted up some time or other. Taylor said, "It shall be lighted to-morrow evening." "That will do very well," answered Boswell, "for it is Dr. Johnson's birthday." Johnson (who hated to have his birthday mentioned) sternly replied, "I will not have the lustre lighted to-morrow."

Next day, some ladies, who had been present during the above conversation, came to dinner, and made matters still worse by wishing the Doctor "the compliments of the season." "Compli-

AN AWKWARD COMPLIMENT.

328

ments!" What is there complimentary in reminding a man that he is twelvemonths older, and, of necessity therefore, a year nearer death! The Doctor's feeling was solemnly earnest to him, yet we can hardly help laughing at it. "Life was never anything yet but a perpetual see-saw between gravity and jest."

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN ODD FAMILY-CONVERSATIONS-A DRAMATIC EVENING.

(1777—1778.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" London, Nov. 26, 1777.

- "DEAR SIR,
- "You will wonder, or you have wondered, why no letter has come from me.
- "I hope you found, at your return, my dear enemy and all her little people quite well, and had no reason to repent of your journey. I think on it with great gratitude.
- "I was not well when you left me at the Doctor's, and I grew worse; yet I stayed on, and at Lichfield was very ill. Travelling, however, did not make me worse; and when I came to London, I complied with a summons to go to Brighthelmstone, where I saw Beauclerk, and stayed three days.
- "Our Club has recommenced last Friday, but I was not there. Langton has another wench. Mrs. Thrale is in hopes of a young brewer. They got by their trade last year a very large sum, and their expenses are proportionate.
- "Mrs. Williams's health is very bad. And I have had for some time a very difficult and laborious respiration; but I am better by purges, abstinence, and other methods. I am yet, however, much behindhand in my health and rest.
- "Dr. Blair's sermons are now universally commended; but let him think that I had the honour of first finding and first praising his excellences. I did not stay to add my voice to that of the public.
 - "My dear Friend, let me thank you once more for your visit:

you did me great honour, and, I hope, met with nothing that displeased you. I stayed long at Ashbourne, not much pleased, yet awkward at departing. I then went to Lichfield, where I found my friend at Stowhill very dangerously diseased. Such is life. Let us try to pass it well, whatever it be, for there is surely something beyond it.

"Well, now, I hope all is well. Write as soon as you can to, dear Sir,

"Your affectionate servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" London, December 27, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,

"This is the time of the year in which all express their good wishes to their friends, and I send mine to you and your family. May your lives be long, happy, and good. I have been much out of order, but, I hope, do not grow worse.

"All our friends are as they were; little has happened to them of either good or bad. Mrs. Thrale ran a great black hair-dressing pin into her eye; but by great evacuation she kept it from inflaming, and it is almost well. Miss Reynolds has been out of order, but is better. Mrs. Williams is in a very poor state of health.

"If I should write on, I should, perhaps, write only complaints, and therefore I will content myself with telling you that I love to think on you, and to hear from you; and that I am, dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"Sam. Johnson."

" BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, March 12, 1778.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"The alarm of your late illness distressed me but a few hours, for on the evening of the day that it reached me I found it contradicted in the 'London Chronicle,' which I could depend upon as authentic concerning you, Mr. Strahan being the printer

of it. I did not see the paper in which 'the approaching extinction of a bright luminary' was announced. Sir William Forbes told me of it; and he says he saw me so uneasy that he did not give me the report in such strong terms as he read it. He afterwards sent me a letter from Mr. Langton to him, which relieved me much. I am, however, not quite easy, as I have not heard from you; and now I shall not have that comfort before I see you, for I set out for London to-morrow before the post comes in. I hope to be with you on Wednesday morning; and I ever am, with the highest veneration, my dear Sir, your most obliged, faithful, and affectionate humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL"

When Boswell reached our Author's house, he found the room usually assigned to him during his London visits now occupied by a Mrs. Desmoulins, her daughter, and another lady, a Miss Carmichael, three more pensioners of our dear and venerable friend. Mrs. Desmoulins received from the Doctor half-a-guinea a week—a twelfth part of his whole pension! But Johnson had given away his last half-guinea before now; and his heart did not grow narrower as his days neared their close. So the Doctor's existence is not all talk, then, as such a fine bit of incident proves. The spoken part of his life is, indeed, loud and boisterous enough at times; but from beneath it all there ever and anon looks out, quietly and beautifully, the sweet face of some grand good deed.

What a curious breakfast-party that must have been that assembled of a morning, or, rather, of a mid-day, at No. 7, Bolt Court, Fleet Street, in that year 1778! Old Mr. Levett, always docile and reverential, managing the tea-kettle; old Mrs. Williams, blind, frail, and peevish, feeling round the cups to see that they are full; the three fresh arrivals, scarcely yet quite at home in their new quarters; and the high-souled, noble-hearted Doctor, sitting lord and master of the whole odd group, himself the oddest of them all. Nor must we forget negro Frank, and Hodge the cat, the latter of whom is at this very moment, perhaps, delightedly scrambling up the Doctor's breast, while the sage, smiling and half-whistling,

rubs down his back, and pulls him tenderly by the tail, and, on the observation being made by an impartial beholder that Hodge is a fine cat, adding, "Why, yes, Sir; but I have had cats whom I liked better than this;" and then, by way of atonement to Hodge for this ungenerous estimate, winding up soothingly with, "but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed."

One can hardly look too long at such a quaintly beautiful scene. Would not life lose half its zest to most of us, if all the odd people in the world were to be mercilessly lashed out of it with refinement's whip of small cords—very small cords indeed? It is to be hoped that, even when Society shall have realized its Ideal, some queer little corner will still be reserved for those perversely angular men and women who cannot get squeezed into the orthodox holes shaped with mathematical precision.

We have repeatedly referred to Johnson's strict veracity and scrupulous regard to accuracy in relating even the smallest events. "Accustom your children," said he to Mrs. Thrale, about this time, "constantly to this; if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from truth will end."-Boswell: "It may come to the door: and when once an account is at all varied in one circumstance, it may by degrees be varied so as to be totally different from what really happened."—MRS. THRALE: "Nay, this is too much. If Mr. Johnson should forbid me to drink tea, I would comply, as I should feel the restraint only twice a day; but little variations in narrative must happen a thousand times a day, it one is not perpetually watching."-JOHNSON: "Well, Madam, and you ought to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying that there is so much falsehood in the world."

One other morning he talked to Boswell very seriously of a certain female friend's "laxity of narration and inattention to truth." "I am as much vexed," said he, "at the ease with which she hears it mentioned to her, as at the thing itself. I told her, 'Madam, you are contented to hear every day said to you, what the highest

of mankind have died for rather than bear.' You know, Sir, the highest of mankind have died rather than bear to be told they have uttered a falsehood. Do talk to her of it: I am weary."

So convinced was our Author of most people's want of desire, or want of ability, to carry a story without hurting it, that he would often, without any ceremony, stop a gentleman in the midst of some wonderful narrative with a stern "It is not so. Do not tell this again." But about our hero himself there was an air of veracity; and one could not be half an hour in his company without feeling its bracing influence. His friends, especially, inhaled it freely, and grew stronger with every draught; so much so, that Sir Joshua Reynolds once remarked that "all who were of Johnson's school were distinguished for a love of truth and accuracy, which they would not have possessed in the same degree if they had not been acquainted with him." A finer judgment never was passed upon a mortal man.

Monday, March 30th: MR. THRALE'S.

JOHNSON: "Thomas à Kempis must be a good book, as the world has opened its arms to receive it. It is said to have been printed, in one language or other, as many times as there have been months since it first came out. I always was struck with this sentence in it: 'Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.'"

JOHNSON: "A man loves to review his own mind. That is the use of a diary or journal."—LORD TRIMLESTOWN: "True, Sir. As the ladies love to see themselves in a glass, so a man likes to see himself in his journal."—Boswell: "A very pretty allusion."—Johnson: "Yes, indeed."—Boswell: "And as a lady adjusts her dress before a mirror, a man adjusts his character by looking at his journal."

Friday, April 3rd.

F.: "I have been looking at this famous antique marble dog of Mr. Jennings, valued at a thousand guineas, said to be

Alcibiades' dog."-JOHNSON: "His tail, then, must be docked. That was the mark of Alcibiades' dog."—E.: "A thousand guineas! The representation of no animal whatever is worth so much. this rate a dead dog would indeed be better than a living lion." -JOHNSON: "Sir, it is not the worth of the thing, but of the skill in forming it, which is so highly estimated. Every thing that enlarges the sphere of human powers, that shows man he can do what he thought he could not do, is valuable. The first man who balanced a straw upon his nose; Johnson, who rode upon three horses at a time; in short, all such men deserved the applause of mankind, not on account of the use of what they did, but of the dexterity which they exhibited."-Boswell: "Yet a misapplication of time and assiduity is not to be encouraged. Addison, in one of his 'Spectators,' commends the judgment of a king, who, as a suitable reward to a man that by long perseverance had attained to the art of throwing a barleycorn through the eye of a needle, gave him a bushel of barley.— JOHNSON: "He must have been a king of Scotland, where barley is scarce."-F.: "One of the most remarkable antique figures of an animal is the boar at Florence."-JOHNSON: "The first boar that is well made in marble should be preserved as a wonder. When men arrive at the facility of making boars well, then the workmanship is not of such value; but they should, however, be preserved as examples, and as a greater security for the restoration of the art, should it be lost."

JOHNSON: "There must always be right enough, or appearance of right, to keep wrong in countenance." A memorable saying.

Saturday, April 4th: Dr. TAYLOR'S, Dean's Yard, Westminster.

Our Doctor very silent and sulky-looking: reads in a great variety of books, taking up first one and then another, and throwing them away each in turn: talks of going to Streatham that night.—TAYLOR: "You'll be robbed if you do; or you must shoot a highwayman. Now, I would rather be robbed than do that; I would not shoot a highwayman."—JOHNSON: "But I would rather shoot him in the instant when he is attempting to rob me, than afterwards swear against him at the Old Bailey, to take away his life, after he has

robbed me. I am surer I am right in the one case than in the other. I may be mistaken as to the man when I swear: I cannot be mistaken if I shoot him in the act. Besides, we feel less reluctance to take away a man's life when we are heated by the injury, than to do it at a distance of time by an oath, after we have cooled."—Boswell: "So, Sir, you would rather act from the motive of private passion than that of public advantage."—Johnson: "Nay, Sir, when I shoot the highwayman, I act from both."

—Boswell: "Very well, very well. There is no catching him."—Johnson: "At the same time, one does not know what to say. For, perhaps, one may, a year after, hang himself from uneasiness for having shot a highwayman! Few minds are fit to be trusted with so great a thing."—Boswell: "Then, Sir, you would not shoot him?"—Johnson: "But I might be vexed afterwards for that, too."

Tuesday, April 7th: The Doctor's House.

Johnson repeated one of his own favourite texts, "Nobody is content." Boswell mentioned a respectable Scotch gentleman whom the Doctor knew, and declared that he really believed he was always contented.

JOHNSON: "No, Sir, he is not content with the present; he has always some new scheme, some new plantation, something which is future. You know he was not content as a widower; for he married again."—Boswell: "But he is not restless."— JOHNSON: "Sir, he is only locally at rest. A chemist is locally at rest; but his mind is hard at work. This gentleman has done with external exertions. It is too late for him to engage in distant projects."—Boswell: "He seems to amuse himself quite well; to have his attention fixed, and his tranquillity preserved by very small matters. I have tried this; but it would not do with me."-Johnson [laughing]: "No, Sir; it must be born with a man to be contented to take up with little things. Women have a great advantage that they may take up with little things, without disgracing themselves; a man cannot, except with fiddling. Had I learnt to fiddle. I should have done nothing else."-Bos-WELL: "Pray, Sir, did you ever play on any musical instrument?"

—Johnson: "No, Sir, I once bought me a flageolet; but I never made out a tune."—Boswell: "A flageolet, Sir?—so small an instrument? I should like to hear you play on the violoncello. That should have been your instrument."—Johnson: "Sir, I might as well have played on the violoncello as another; but I should have done nothing else. No, Sir; a man would never undertake great things could he be amused with small. I once tried knotting. Dempster's sister undertook to teach me; but I could not learn it."

A ready-witted lady, when Johnson's practice on the modest flageolet was mentioned to her, replied with a smart quotation from "Acis and Galatea"—

"Bring me a hundred reeds of ample growth,
To make a pipe for my CAPACIOUS MOUTH."

This is a good example of the sort of quickening power which the Doctor's marked individuality exercised upon all who knew him. Whatever talent others possessed was tempted into the open air under the strengthening impulse communicated by his mere presence. Although the Doctor sometimes overflowed and drawned the rest, he far more frequently caused their own smaller streams to flow.

Thursday, April 9th: SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS'S.

Goldsmith being mentioned, Johnson observed that it was long before his merit came to be acknowledged; that he once complained to him, in ludicrous terms of distress, "Whenever I write anything, the public make a point to know nothing about it;" but that his "Traveller" brought him into high reputation.—Langton: "There is not one bad line in that poem—not one of Dryden's careless verses."—SIR JOSHUA: "I was glad to hear Charles Fox say it was one of the finest poems in the English language."—Langton: "Why were you glad? You surely had no doubt of this before."—Johnson: "No; the merit of 'The Traveller' is so well established, that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it, nor his censure diminish it."—SIR JOSHUA: "But his friends may suspect they had too great a partiality for him."—Johnson 'Nay, Sir, the partiality of his friendswas always against him. It

was with difficulty we could give him a hearing. Goldsmith had no settled notions upon any subject; so he talked always at random. It seemed to be his intention to blurt out whatever was in his mind, and see what would become of it. He was angry, too, when caught in an absurdity; but it did not prevent him from falling into another the next minute. I remember Chamier, after talking with him some time, said, 'Well, I do believe he wrote this poem himself; and, let me tell you, that is believing a great deal.' Chamier once asked him, what he meant by slow, the last word in the first line of 'The Traveller.'

'Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow.'

Did he mean tardiness of locomotion? Goldsmith, who would say something without consideration, answered, 'Yes.' I was sitting by, and said 'No, Sir; you do not mean tardiness of locomotion; you mean that sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude.' Chamier believed then that I had written the line, as much as if he had seen me write it. Goldsmith, however, was a man who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster Abbey; and every year he lived, would have deserved it better. He had, indeed, been at no pains to fill his mind with knowledge. He transplanted it from one place to another; and it did not settle in his mind; so he could not tell what was in his own books."

But perhaps the most portable saying the Doctor ever made about poor Goldsmith is the well-known epigram, "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had."

Friday, April 10th: MR. Scott's Chambers.

Garrick's fame was spoken of, and his assuming the airs of a great man.

JOHNSON: "Sir, it is wonderful how little Garrick assumes. No. Sir, Garrick fortunam reverenter habet. Consider, Sir,—other celebrated men have had their applause at a distance; but Garrick had it dashed in his face, sounded in his ears, and went home every night with the plaudits of a thousand

in his cranium. Then, Sir, Garrick did not find, but made his way to the tables, the levees, and almost the bed-chambers of the great. Then, Sir, Garrick had under him a numerous body of people, who, from fear of his power, and hopes of his favour, and admiration of his talents, were constantly submissive to him. And here is a man who has advanced the dignity of his profession. Garrick has made a player a higher character."-Scott: "And he is a very sprightly writer too."—JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; and all this supported by great wealth of his own acquisition. If all this had happened to me, I should have had a couple of fellows with long poles walking before me, to knock down everybody that stood in the way. Consider, if all this had happened to Cibber or Quin, they'd have jumped over the moon. Yet Garrick speaks to us" [smiling].—Boswell: "And Garrick is a very good man, a charitable man."—Johnson: "Sir, a liberal man. He has given away more money than any man in England. There may be a little vanity mixed; but he has shown that money is not his first object."-Boswell: "Yet Foote used to say of him that he walked out with an intention to do a generous action; but turning the corner of a street, he met with the ghost of a halfpenny, which frightened him."-JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, that is very true, too; for I never knew a man of whom it could be said with less certainty to-day what he will do to-morrow than Garrick; it depends so much on his humour at the time."-Scott: "I am glad to hear of his liberality. He has been represented as very saving."-JOHNSON: "With his domestic saving we have nothing to do. I remember drinking tea with him long ago, when Peg Woffington made it, and he grumbled at her for making it too strong, saying, 'Why, it is as red as blood.' He had then begun to feel money in his purse, and did not know when he should have enough of it."

Sir Joshua Reynolds used to observe that Johnson considered Garrick as his *property*—nobody must either praise or blame him but his old tutor.

A DRAMATIC EVENING.

Sunday, April 12th: Dr. PERCY's.

Quite a dramatic evening—almost tragic.

On the mention of Books of Travels, Johnson praised Pennant very highly. Now, this Pennant had spoken slightingly of Alnwick Castle and the Duke of Northumberland's pleasure-grounds: shall a Percy sit quietly by and hear the calumniator of his race applauded thus? Never.

JOHNSON: "Pennant, in what he has said of Alnwick, has done what he intended; he has made you very angry."—PERCY: "He has said the garden is trim, which is representing it like a citizen's parterre, when the truth is, there is a very large extent of fine turf and gravel walks."—JOHNSON: "According to your own account, Sir, Pennant is right. It is trim. Here is grass cut close, and gravel rolled smooth. Is not that trim? The extent is nothing against that; a mile may be as trim as a square yard. Your extent puts me in mind of the citizen's enlarged dinner, two pieces of roast beef and two puddings. There is no variety, no mind exerted in laying out the ground, no trees."-PERCY: "He pretends to give the natural history of Northumberland, and yet takes no notice of the immense number of trees planted there of late."—JOHNSON: "That, Sir, has nothing to do with the natural history; that is civil history. A man who gives the natural history of the oak, is not to tell how many oaks have been planted in this place or that. A man who gives the natural history of the cow, is not to tell how many cows are milked at Islington. The animal is the same, whether milked in the Park or at Islington."-PERCY: "Pennant does not describe well: a carrier who goes along the side of Lochlomond would describe it better."-JOHNSON: "I think he describes very well."-PERCY: "I travelled after him."-JOHNson: "And I travelled after him."—PERCY: "But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do."-JOHNSON [pointedly]: "This is the resentment of a narrow mind, because he did not find everything in Northumberland."—PERCY: "Sir, you may be as rude as you please."—JOHNSON: "Hold, Sir! Don't talk of rudeness; remember, Sir, you told me [puffing hard, with passion struggling for a vent] I was short-sighted.

have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please."-PERCY: "Upon my honour, Sir, I did not mean to be uncivil."— JOHNSON: "I cannot say so, Sir; for I did mean to be uncivil, thinking you had been uncivil." Dr. Percy rose, ran up to him, and taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been misunderstood; upon which a reconciliation instantly took place. Johnson: "My dear Sir, I am willing you shall hang Pennant."—PERCY [resuming the former subject]: "Pennant complains that the helmet is not hung out to invite to the hall of hospitality. Now, I never heard that it was a custom to hang out a helmet."-JOHNSON: "Hang him up, hang him up."—Boswell [humouring the joke]: "Hang out his skull instead of a helmet, and you may drink ale out of it in your hall of Odin, as he is your enemy; that will be truly ancient. will be 'Northern Antiquities.' "-Johnson: "He's a Whig, Sir; a sad dog [smiling at his own violent expressions, merely for political difference of opinion]. But he's the best traveller I ever read; he observes more things than any one else does."

The storm having thus spent its fury, all was peace again: supper-time came, and the evening closed harmoniously.

[&]quot;The falling-out of faithful friends renewing is of love."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

JOHNSON'S BEFORE-DINNER TALK—CONVERSATIONS—THE DOCTOR
AND AN OLD COLLEGE-MATE.

(1778.)

Monday, April 13th: Mr. Langton's.

Previous to the cheering and inspiring sound of the dinnerbell, Boswell's duties, as reporter of the Doctor's conversation, must have been extremely light, as the latter only said two words, and these to a child, "Pretty baby!"—a speech which, by its brevity, reminded Langton of Johnson's declaration that he could repeat a whole chapter of "The Natural History of Iceland," which stood simply thus:—

"CHAPTER LXXII. Concerning Snakes.

There are no snakes to be met with throughout the whole island."

Our Author's before-dinner speeches were equally concise and portable; but we have given this "Pretty Baby" a whole evening to itself, as being the very briefest on record. At the same time, it is right to state that these words, though few, were doubtless sincere; for Johnson loved children, and proved his love by giving them all sorts of sweetmeats—the surest introduction to a young child's heart.

Wednesday, April 15th: MR. DILLY'S.

Two clever ladies present: Mrs. Knowles, of whose charms, as our readers will remember, Wilkes had jocularly declared the Doctor enamoured; and Miss Seward, who had made the apt quotation from "Acis and Galatea," which we gave a few pages back.

Naturally enough, with two such ingenious ladies at table, the talk turned upon Woman's Rights. Mrs. Knowles stood up manfully for her sex, as the following conversation will show:—

MRS. KNOWLES: "It is not fair that men should have so much more liberty allowed them than women."—JOHNSON: "Why, Madam, women have all the liberty they should wish to have. We have all the labour and the danger, and the women all the advantage. We go to sea, we build houses, we do everything, in short, to pay our court to the women."-Mrs. Knowles: "The Doctor reasons very wittily, but not convincingly. Now, take the instance of building; the mason's wife, if she is ever seen in liquor, is ruined; the mason may get himself drunk as often as he pleases, with little loss of character; nay, may let his wife and children starve."-Johnson: "Madam, you must consider, if the mason does get himself drunk, and let his wife and children starve, the parish will oblige him to find security for their We have different modes of restraining evil. maintenance. Stocks for the men, a ducking-stool for women, and a pound for If we require more perfection from women than from ourselves, it is doing them honour. And women have not the same temptations that we have; they may always live in virtuous company; men must mix in the world indiscriminately. woman has no inclination to do what is wrong, being secured from it is no restraint to her. I am at liberty to walk into the Thames; but if I were to try it, my friends would restrain me in Bedlam, and I should be obliged to them."—Mrs. Knowles: "Still, Doctor, I cannot help thinking it a hardship that more indulgence is allowed to men than to women. It gives a superiority to men, to which I do not see how they are entitled."-JOHNSON: "It is plain, Madam, one or other must have the superiority. As Shakespeare says, 'If two men ride on a horse, one must ride behind."-DILLY: "I suppose, Sir, Mrs. Knowles would have them ride in panniers, one on each side."-Johnson: "Then, Sir, the horse would throw them both."—MRS. KNOWLES: "Well, I hope that in another world the sexes will be equal."

After a spirited talk about love and friendship, Johnson broke

forth, "I am willing to love all mankind, except an American." Then followed a volley of wrathful language, the very mildest words audible being "Rascals—Robbers—Pirates"—and the whole terminating with the pleasant assurance that, if he had his way, "he'd burn and destroy them." Miss Seward, looking at the enraged Doctor, mildly but firmly observed, "Sir, this is an instance that we are always most violent against those we have injured "—[referring to his "Taxation no Tyranny"]. The Doctor felt the sting, but only vented his pain in another terrific roar, after which this little bit of wild by-play came to an end.

The Doctor's hatred of the Americans, though unreasonable and violent, was steady and unflinching—as all his acquaintances knew. At one of Miss E. Hervey's assemblies, Dr. Johnson was following her up and down the room; upon which Lord Abingdon observed to her, "Your great friend is very fond of you: you can go nowhere without him." "Ay," said she, "he would follow me to any part of the world." "Then," said the Earl, "ask him to go with you to America."

April 17th: Good Friday.

Boswell called as usual, and found the Doctor fasting with his customary strictness. They went to church at St. Clement Danes. The day was beautiful, and, in Boswell's eyes, London looked sublime. "Fleet Street," said he, "is in my mind more delightful than Tempé."

JOHNSON: "Ay, Sir; but let it be compared with Mull."

On their return from church, a decent-looking elderly man in grey clothes and many-curled wig accosted Johnson with the air of an old acquaintance; a salutation which the Doctor only acknowledged by a polite but formal bow. But when the stranger said that his name was Edwards, and reminded the Doctor that they had been at College together nine-and-forty years ago, the old acquaintanceship was renewed at once and warmly.

EDWARDS: "Ah, Sir! we are old men now."—Johnson [who never liked to think of being old]: "Don't let us discourage one another."—EDWARDS: "Why, Doctor, you look stout and hearty;

344 FOHNSON MEETS A COLLEGE-MATE.

I am happy to see you so; for the newspapers told us you were very ill."—Johnson: "Ah, Sir, they are always telling lies of us old fellows."

Here Boswell whispered Edwards that they were on their way home just now, and that he had better accompany them. ears itched to hear, and his fingers to report, such an interesting conversation as that must needs be between the two old chums. Edwards informed them that he had practised long as a solicitor in Chancery, but lived in the country now upon a little farm in Herts—generally coming to town twice a week. Johnson seeming to have fallen into a brown study, Mr. Edwards addressed himself to Boswell, and expatiated on the pleasure of living in the country. Boswell: "I have no notion of this, Sir. have to entertain you is. I think, exhausted in half an hour."-EDWARDS: "What! don't you love to have hope realised? see my grass, and my corn, and my trees growing. instance, I am curious to see if this frost has not nipped my fruit trees."—Johnson [who, they thought, had not been attending]: "You find, Sir, you have fears as well as hopes."

Hereupon they reached the Doctor's house, and the whole party speedily found themselves seated snugly in the library, and talking vigorously.

EDWARDS: "Sir, I remember you would not let us say prodigious at College. For even then, Sir (turning to Boswell) he was delicate in language, and we all feared him."—Johnson [to Edwards]: "From your having practised the law long, Sir, I presume you must be rich."—EDWARDS: "No, Sir; I got a good deal of money, but I had a number of poor relations, to whom I gave great part of it."—Johnson: "Sir, you have been rich in the most valuable sense of the word."—EDWARDS: "But I shall not die rich."—Johnson: "Nay, sure, Sir, it is better to live rich than to die rich."—EDWARDS: "I wish I had continued at College."—Johnson: "Why do you wish that, Sir?"—EDWARDS: "Because I think I should have had a much easier life than mine has been. I should have been a parson, and had a good living, like Bloxham and several others, and lived comfortably."—Johnson: "Sir, the life of a parson, of a conscientious clergyman, is

not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather have Chancery suits upon my hands than the cure of souls. No, Sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life; nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life." Here taking himself up all of a sudden, he exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Edwards! I'll convince you that I recollect you. Do you remember our drinking together at an alchouse near Pembroke Gate? At that time you told me of the Eton boy who, when verses on Our Saviour's turning water into wine were prescribed as an exercise, brought up a single line, which was highly admired:—

'Vidit et erubuit lympha pudica DEUM.'

And I told you of another fine line in 'Camden's Remains,' an eulogy upon one of our kings, who was succeeded by his son, a prince of equal merit:—

'Mira cano, Sol occubuit, nox nulla secuta est.'"

EDWARDS: "You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in. I have been twice married, Doctor. You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have a wife."—Johnson: "Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and (in a solemn, tender, faltering tone) I have known what it was to lose a wife. I had almost broke my heart."

EDWARDS: "How do you live, Sir? For my part I must have my regular meals and a glass of good wine. I find I require it."

—JOHNSON: "I now drink no wine, Sir. Early in life I drank wine: for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal."—EDWARDS: "Some hogsheads, I warrant you."—JOHNSON: "I then had a severe illness, and left it off, and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one thing rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a difference; but I am not one of them. And as to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner without any inconvenience. I believe it is best to eat just as one is hungry: but a man who is in business, or a

man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler. I may leave this town and go to Grand Cairo, without being missed here or observed there."—EDWARDS: "Don't you eat supper, Sir?"—JOHNSON: "No, Sir."—EDWARDS: "For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which one must pass, in order to get to bed."

JOHNSON: "You are a lawyer, Mr. Edwards. Lawyers know life practically. A bookish man should always have them to converse with. They have what he wants."—EDWARDS: "I am grown old; I am sixty-five."—JOHNSON: "I shall be sixty-nine next birthday. Come, Sir; drink water, and put in for a hundred."

When taking his leave, Edwards again referred to the obnoxious subject of old age, saying, as he looked Johnson full in the face, "You'll find in Dr. Young,

'O, my coevals! remnants of yourselves.'"

The Doctor shook his head with impatience—not liking this sort of joke; but parted none the less affectionately with his old college-mate. And thus the curtain fell upon a scene as delicious as any in our most popular plays.

Saturday, April 18th: The Doctor's House.

Johnson again fired off a tremendous volley of abuse upon his old enemies the Americans. Boswell attempted to put in a favourable word for the assailed, adding, that he was always sorry when his friend talked on that subject. The Doctor said nothing in reply; but he silently bided his time—such a rebuke should by no means go unrewarded. Boswell should be paid back with interest. The moment of revenge was nigh, and it arrived thus.

Talking of a gentleman who was wasting his fortune in London, Boswell said: "We must get him out of it. All his friends must quarrel with him, and that will soon drive him away."—Johnson: "Nay, Sir, we'll send you to him. If your company does not drive a man out of his house, nothing will." This was a horrible shock, for which there was no visible cause. Boswell afterwards asked him, why he had said so harsh a thing. Johnson: "Because, Sir, you made me angry about the Americans."—Boswell:

"But why did you not take your revenge directly?"—Johnson [smiling]: "Because, Sir, I had nothing ready. A man cannot strike till he has weapons."

That smile took all the venom out of the lately-inflicted wound; and the two were instantly as good friends as ever. We are positively falling in love with these exquisite little encounters. Quarrels are made beautiful by such sweet atonements. One would almost consent to be knocked down twice a week if one were always sure of being picked up so cleverly and kindly.

Afterwards, when showing Boswell his drawing-room, which was very nicely fitted up, the Doctor said: "Mrs. Thrale sneered, when I talked of my having asked you and your lady to live at my house. I was obliged to tell her that you would be in as respectable a situation in my house as in hers. Sir, the insolence of wealth will creep out."—Boswell: "She has a little both of the insolence of wealth and the conceit of parts."—Johnson: "The insolence of wealth is a wretched thing, but the conceit of parts has some foundation. To be sure it should not be. But who is without it?"—Boswell: "Yourself, Sir."—Johnson: "Why, I play no tricks: I lay no traps."—Boswell: "No, Sir. You are six feet high, and you only do not stoop."

This was pretty plain speaking to a man's own face; but it was the exact truth, and Johnson was not to be spoiled by flattery.

Monday, April 20th: JOHNSON'S House.

We have taken note of this day for the sake of one splendid deliverance—the readiness, richness, strength, passion of which are astounding, especially when one knows that it was merely a remark by the way.

Speaking of a gentleman who was ruining himself by extravagance, he said: "Wasting a fortune is evaporation by a thousand imperceptible means. If it were a stream, they'd stop it. You must speak to him. It is really miserable. Were he a gamester, it could be said he had hopes of winning. Were he a bankrupt in trade, he might have grown rich; but he has neither spirit to spend nor resolution to spare. He does not spend fast enough to have pleasure from it. He has the crime of prodigality and the wretchedness of parsimony. If a man is killed in a duel, he is killed as many a one has been killed: but it is a sad thing for a man to lie down and die; to bleed to death, because he has not fortitude enough to sear the wound, or even to stitch it up."

We see a fine *emotional* intellect at work in a speech like that: it is as tender as it is strong.

Tuesday, April 28th: General PAOLI's.

Boswell called for the Doctor, and the two set off together in a hackney-coach, making two stoppages by the way-one at the call of humanity, to leave a letter with "good news for a poor man in distress," and the other at the command of etiquette, to buy a new pair of silk buckles. For this latter purpose the Doctor had been directed to a toy-shop in St. James's Street, but not very clearly, it appeared; since he required to search about for itremarking, as he looked all round, "To direct one only to a corner-shop is toying with one." Mark the pun, for puns are almost as rare as pearls with our good Doctor. Having found the shop, he entered and began to negotiate: "Sir, I will not have the ridiculous large ones now in fashion; and I will give no more than a guinea for a pair." This is a man who will not buy even a pair of buckles except on principle. We may remark here that Johnson's connection with the Thrales had gradually led to several improvements in his outward appearance; he dressed better, wore better wigs, and, although he still steadily stuck to dark colours in his clothes, he had been prevailed upon to adorn his sober suits with metal buttons. In fact, he must have been quite spruce at this time.

Boswell [as they drove along]: "I drank chocolate, Sir, this morning with Mr. Eld; and, to my no small surprise, found him to be a Staffordshire Whig, a being which I did not believe had existed."—Johnson: "Sir, there are rascals in all countries."—Boswell: "Eld said, a Tory was a creature generated between a non-juring parson and one's grandmother."—Johnson: "And I have always said, the first Whig was the Devil."—Boswell: "He

certainly was, Sir. The Devil was impatient of subordination; he was the first who resisted power:—

'Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."

After dinner the talk turned upon wine-drinking—a very spirited talk too, as became such a theme. Reynolds argued for wine, and Boswell, although at that time a water-drinker himself, upon trial, backed Sir Joshua.

JOHNSON: "Boswell is a bolder combatant than Sir Joshua: he argues for wine without the help of wine; but Sir Joshua with it."—SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: "But to please one's company is a strong motive."-JOHNSON [who, from drinking only water, supposed every body who drank wine to be elevated]: "I won't argue any more with you, Sir. You are too far gone."—SIR JOSHUA: "I should have thought so indeed, Sir, had I made such a speech as you have now done."-JOHNSON [drawing himself in, and almost blushing]: "Nay, don't be angry. I did not mean to offend you."—SIR JOSHUA: "At first the taste of wine was disagreeable to me; but I brought myself to drink it, that I might be like other people. The pleasure of drinking wine is so connected with pleasing your company, that altogether there is something of social goodness in it."—JOHNSON: "Sir, this is only saying the same thing over again."—SIR JOSHUA: "No, this is new."-Johnson: "You put it in new words, but it is an old thought. This is one of the disadvantages of wine, it makes a man mistake words for thoughts."-Boswell: "I think it is a new thought; at least it is in a new attitude."-Johnson: "Nay, Sir, it is only in a new coat; or an old coat with a new facing. [Then laughing heartily]—It is the old dog in a new doublet."

Wednesday, April 29th: Mr. Allan Ramsay's.

The Doctor here again harangued against wine-drinking—Dr. Robertson taking the opposite side.

JOHNSON: "A man may choose whether he will have abstemiousness and knowledge, or claret and ignorance." Dr. Robert son [a very sociable man] was beginning to exclaim against

the proscription of claret. Johnson [with a placid smile]: "Nay, Sir, you shall not differ with me; as I have said that the man is most perfect who takes in the most things, I am for knowledge and claret."—Robertson [holding a glass of generous claret in his hand]: "Sir, I can only drink your health."—Johnson: "Sir, I should be sorry if you should be ever in such a state as to be able to do nothing more."—Robertson: "Dr. Johnson, allow me to say, that in one respect I have the advantage of you; when you were in Scotland you would not come to hear any of our preachers, whereas, when I am here, I attend your public worship without scruple, and, indeed, with great satisfaction."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, that is not so extraordinary; the King of Siam sent ambassadors to Louis the Fourteenth; but Louis the Fourteenth sent none to the King of Siam,"

Thursday, April 30th: At Home.

JOHNSON: "I value myself upon this, that there is nothing of the old man in my conversation. I am now sixty-eight, and I have no more of it than at twenty-eight."-Boswell: "But, Sir, would you not wish to know old age? He who is never an old man, does not know the whole of human life; for old age is one of the divisions of it."-JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, what talk is this?" -Boswell: "I mean, Sir, the Sphinx's description of itmorning, noon, and night. I would know night, as well as morning and noon."-Johnson: "What, Sir, would you know what it is to feel the evils of old age? Would you have the gout? Would you have decrepitude? [Then, abruptly changing the subject]: Mrs. Thrale's mother said of me what flattered me much. A clergyman was complaining of want of society in the country where he lived, and said, 'They talk of runts;' that is, young cows. 'Sir,' said Mrs. Salusbury, 'Mr. Johnson would learn to talk of runts,' meaning that I was a man who would make the most of my situation, whatever it was." The Doctor added, "I think myself a very polite man." And he was-if politeness means anything below the skin.

We are grateful for the Doctor's occasional little bits of self-



PRAISE OF SELF JUSTIFIED.

35 I

exposition: when a man's conduct is so sadly liable to misinterpretation at times, we ought not to grudge him the privilege of himself suggesting now and then the correct reading. "If a man do not erect" in these ages "his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bells ring and the widow weeps."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN AMUSING FAREWELL—"LIVES OF THE POETS"—A PARSON-POET—QUARREL AND RECONCILIATION.

(1778-1779.)

On Saturday, May 2nd, Boswell dined with the Doctor at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, and was there so rudely treated by him—before all the company, and for an offence quite imaginary—that he became really angry: his pride was hurt and his feelings outraged beyond endurance. He stayed away from Johnson a whole week, and would even have returned to Scotland without seeing him again had they not happened to meet some days afterwards at Mr. Langton's, where a reconciliation was effected thus:—

JOHNSON [drawing his chair close to that of Boswell, who was sitting silent and sulky]: "Well, how have you done?"-Bos-WELL: "Sir, you have made me very uneasy by your behaviour to me when we were last at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. You know, my dear Sir, no man has a greater respect and affection for you. or would sooner go to the end of the world to serve you. rupted him: the latter assured him that was not the case, and proceeded, "But why treat me so before people who neither love you nor me?"-JOHNSON: "Well, I am sorry for it. I'll make it up to you twenty different ways, as you please."-Boswell: "I said to-day to Sir Joshua, when he observed that you tossed me sometimes, 'I don't care how often or how high he tosses me, when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground; but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present.' I think this is a pretty good image, Sir."-JOHNSON: "Sir, it is one of the happiest I ever have heard."

So this wound also was healed.

AN AMUSING FAREWELL.

Mr. Langton quoted the anecdote of Addison's distinguishing between his conversational talent and his power of writing, in these words: "I have only ninepence in my pocket; but I can draw for a thousand pounds."—Johnson: "He had not that retort ready, Sir; he had prepared it beforehand."—Langton [turning to Boswell]: "A fine surmise. Set a thief to catch a thief."

Ten days after this Boswell left London for Scotland. The Doctor gave his friend some good counsel and begged him to resolve strongly on the discharge of every duty.

BOSWELL: "But you would not have me bind myself by a solemn obligation?"—JOHNSON [much agitated]: "What! a vow. Oh, no, Sir, a vow is a horrible thing: it is a snare for sin. The man who cannot go to heaven without a vow, may go—."

Here he checked himself; instead of the expected climax giving only a kind of half-whistle: and, as he stood erect in the middle of his library, in the attitude of impassioned exhortation, with a smile at the same time working its way up into his solemn countenance, it were hard to say if the sublime or the ridiculous had the better hold of the scene. Boswell chose to fall in with its humorous aspect, quoting, as a reply to the suppressed portion of the Doctor's speech, a line from one of his imitations of Juvenal,

" And bid him go to hell, to hell he goes."

Thus pleasantly—all offences forgotten and forgiven, and all kind offices, not vowed indeed, but understood—the two friends said Farewell. Boswell did right to hold by his hero in spite of occasional hard treatment from him: this was the grandest man he had ever seen, and it was well for him, as it has been well for us, that he was able to bear with his noble friend's weaknesses. The world's way is to stand contemptuously aloof from its living great ones because of their many shortcomings, and then, when their ears are for ever dulled and their eyes for ever dimmed, to go sentimentalizing to their graves and say: "With all their errors they were mighty men!" Had Boswell done so, literary history would have contained only a very blurred picture of Dr. Samuel Johnson.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"London, July 3, 1778.

"SIR.

"I have received two letters from you, of which the second complains of the neglect shown to the first. You must not tie your friends to such punctual correspondence. You have all possible assurances of my affection and esteem; and there ought to be no need of reiterated professions. When it may happen that I can give you either counsel or comfort, I hope it will never happen to me that I should neglect you; but you must not think me criminal or cold, if I say nothing when I have nothing to say.

"I wish you would a little correct or restrain your imagination, and imagine that happiness, such as life admits, may be had at other places as well as London. Without asserting Stoicism, it may be said, that it is our business to exempt ourselves as much as we can from the power of external things. There is but one solid basis of happiness, and that is, the reasonable hope of a happy futurity. This may be had everywhere.

"I do not blame your preference of London to other places, for it is really to be preferred, if the choice is free; but few have the choice of their place, or their manner of life; and mere pleasure ought not to be the prime motive of action.

"Mrs. Thrale, poor thing, has a daughter. Mr. Thrale dislikes the times, like the rest of us. Mrs. Williams is sick; Mrs. Desmoulins is poor. I have miserable nights. Nobody is well but Mr. Levett.

"I am, dear Sir, your most, &c.,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

What a woeful last paragraph: everybody ill, and ill-tempered too—as appears from a letter of the Doctor's to Mrs. Thrale, which contains this passage: "Williams hates everybody; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams; Desmoulins hates them both; Poll [Miss Carmichael] loves none of them!" Only, his own affectionate loving-kindness never tires.

About this time the Doctor paid a short visit to Bennet

Langton at Warley Camp, where his friend was then stationed as an officer in the Lincolnshire Militia:—

"TO CAPTAIN LANGTON, WARLEY CAMP.

" October 31, 1778.

"DEAR SIR,

"When I recollect how long ago I was received with so much kindness at Warley Common, I am ashamed that I have not made some inquiries after my friends.

"Pray how many sheep-stealers did you convict? and how did you punish them? When are you to be cantoned in better habitations? The air grows cold, and the ground damp. Longer stay in the camp cannot be without much danger to the health of the common men, if even the officers can escape.

"You see that Dr. Percy is now Dean of Carlisle; about five hundred a year, with a power of presenting himself to some good living. He is provided for.

"The session of the Club is to commence with that of the Parliament.

"Did the king please you? The Coxheath men, I think, have some reason to complain: Reynolds says your camp is better than theirs.

"I hope you find yourself able to encounter this weather. Take care of your own health; and, as you can, of your men. Be pleased to make my compliments to all the gentlemen whose notice I have had, and whose kindness I have experienced.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most humble servant,
"Sam. Johnson."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" November 21, 1778.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is indeed a long time since I wrote, and I think you must have some reason to complain; however, you must not let small things disturb you when you have such a fine addition to your happiness as a new boy, and I hope your lady's health is restored by bringing him. It seems very probable that a little care will now restore her, if any remains of her complaints are left.

"When any fit of anxiety, or gloominess, or perversion of mind, lays hold upon you, make it a rule not to publish it by complaints, but exert your whole care to hide it. By endeavouring to hide it you will drive it away. Be always busy.

"The Club is to meet with the Parliament; we talk of electing Banks, the traveller; he will be a reputable member.

"Langton has been encamped with his company of militia on Warley Common; I spent five days amongst them. He signalized himself as a diligent officer, and has very high respect in the regiment. He presided when I was there at a court-martial; he is now quartered in Hertfordshire; his lady and little ones are in Scotland. Paoli came to the camp, and commended the soldiers.

"Of myself I have no great matters to say; my health is not restored; my nights are restless and tedious. The best night that I have had these twenty years was at Fort Augustus.

"I hope soon to send you a few Lives to read.

"I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

In the year 1779, Johnson once more appeared as an author. The first four volumes of his "Prefaces, biographical and critical, to the most eminent of the English poets," were now given to the world. The scheme of publishing "an elegant and uniform edition of 'The English Poets,' with a concise account of the life of each author by Dr. Samuel Johnson," had originated two years previously with about forty London booksellers; and the idea had been cordially welcomed by the Doctor himself. For his part of the work our Author was to receive 200 guineas. He is not to be held responsible, however, for the selection of the poets; that was done for him by the booksellers themselves—only one or two additional names having been added on Johnson's recommendation. As is usual in such cases, his material had swelled under his hands, until quite a large body of biography had grown up before his eyes. In a letter already quoted, dated May 3, 1777,

we find these words: "I am engaged to write little Lives and little Prefaces to a little edition of the English Poets." And in his Advertisement to these early volumes, he says: "The booksellers having determined to publish a body of English Poetry, I was persuaded to promise them a preface to the works of each author; an undertaking, as it was then presented to my mind, not very tedious or difficult. My purpose was only to have allotted to every poet an advertisement, like that which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates, and a general character; but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure."

The result of a work begun with such modest expectations and intentions was, that noble and lasting addition to the literature of our country known as "Johnson's Lives of the Poets," the first instalment of which appeared in the year we have now reached, and the completion of it in 1781. Our further remarks upon this great work we reserve till the last volumes shall have been published.

"MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, Feb. 2, 1779.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Garrick's death is a striking event; not that we should be surprised with the death of any man who has lived sixty-two years, but because there was a vivacity in our late celebrated friend, which drove away the thoughts of death from any association with him. I am sure you will be tenderly affected with his departure; and I would wish to hear from you upon the subject. I was obliged to him in my days of effervescence in London, when poor Derrick was my governor; and since that time I received many civilities from him. Do you remember how pleasing it was, when I received a letter from him at Inverary, upon our first return to civilised living, after our Hebridean journey? I shall always remember him with affection as well as admiration."

So friend Davy's features can have no more "wear and tear:" Garrick has made his last face—a face which few of his old audiences would greatly delight to look upon. He died on the 20th of January, 1779, and was buried with great pomp in Westminster

Abbey, after lying in state for some days at his own house. Johnson, whose praise was always nobly given when it could be given at all, said, "His death has eclipsed the gaiety of nations." The old man's friends are dropping away: a few years more and he too will find a place not far removed from his old pupil's side.

On the 23rd of February, Boswell wrote to the Doctor again, complaining of his silence, as he had heard that he was ill, and had written to Mr. Thrale for information.

"DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" March 13, 1779.

"DEAR SIR,

"Why should you take such delight to make a bustle, to write to Mr. Thrale that I am negligent, and to Francis to do what is so very unnecessary. Thrale, you may be sure, cared not about it; and I shall spare Francis the trouble, by ordering a set both of the Lives and Poets to dear Mrs. Boswell, in acknowledgment of her marmalade. Persuade her to accept them, and accept them kindly. If I thought she would receive them scornfully, I would send them to Miss Boswell, who, I hope, has yet none of her mamma's ill-will to me."

This letter crossed Boswell on his road to London, where he arrived on Monday, March 15th.

Calling at Bolt Court next morning at a late hour, he found himself in the midst of a curious scene. The Doctor was sitting at tea, with Mrs. Desmoulins, Mr. Levett, and a clergyman—a lank, bony figure, with short black hair—who was submitting some poetical effusions of his to the revision of the critic of the age. The piece in hand was a manuscript translation of the Carmen Seculare of Horace. When Johnson had finished reading, the author bluntly asked, "Isn't it a good translation upon the whole?"

JOHNSON: "Sir, I do not say that it may not be made a very good translation"—a verdict which might mean anything, but which seemed to charm the parson-poet.

Next came a printed "Ode to the Warlike Genius of Britain."

While Johnson read, the author kept writhing in his chair, grinning with anxiety to hear the expected words of praise, and exclaiming at intervals, in a keen sharp tone of voice: "Is that poetry, Sir?—Is it Pindar?"

JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, there is here a great deal of what is called poetry."—POET [to Boswell]: "My muse has not been long upon the town, and (pointing to the Ode) it trembles under the hand of the great critic." Johnson proceeded, "Here is an error, Sir; you have made Genius feminine." "Palpable, Sir," cried the enthusiast; "I know it. But (in a lower tone) it was to pay a compliment to the Duchess of Devonshire, with which her Grace was pleased. She is walking across Coxheath, in the military uniform, and I suppose her to be the Genius of Britain."—Johnson: "Sir, you are giving a reason for it; but that will not make it right. You may have a reason why two and two should make five; but they will still make but four."

This is as good as a play; and we have given it both for its own sweet sake and as a typical specimen of what took place again and again in Johnson's life.

One evening about this time, Johnson declaimed upon the qualities of different liquors, speaking with contempt of claret, as being so weak that "a man would be drowned with it before it made him drunk." Having been persuaded to drink one glass of it by way of test, he shook his head and said, "Poor stuff! No, Sir, claret is the liquor for boys; port for men: but he who aspires to be a hero (smiling) must drink brandy. In the first place, the flavour of brandy is most grateful to the palate; and then brandy will do soonest for a man what drinking can do for him. There are, indeed, few who are able to drink brandy. That is a power rather to be wished for than attained. And yet as in all pleasure hope is a considerable part. I know not but fruition comes too quick by brandy. Florence wine I think the worst; it is wine only to the eye; it is wine neither while you are drinking it, nor after you have drunk it : it neither pleases the taste, nor exhilarates the spirits."

Boswell here reminded the Doctor how they two used to drink

wine together, and how he (Boswell) invariably had a head-ache as the issue of their gentle orgies.

JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, it was not the wine that made your head ache, but the sense that I put into it."—Boswell: "What, Sir, will sense make the head ache?"—JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir [with a smile], when it is not used to it." But this hit did not hurt; for Fun stood laughing by.

It was not so, however, with our old acquaintance Beauclerk and the Doctor, nine days after this. He and Johnson were dining with some other friends, when, in the course of the evening, the talk turned upon a Mr. Hackman, who, in a fit of mad jealousy, had shot a Miss Ray, the favourite of a nobleman. seems the murderer had been provided with two pistols, a fact from which Johnson inferred, as Judge Blackstone had done, that he must have meant to shoot two persons. Mr. Beauclerk said, "No; for that every wise man who intended to shoot himself took two pistols, that he might be sure of doing it at once. -'s cook shot himself with one pistol, and lived ten days in Mr. —, who loved buttered muffins, but durst great agony. not eat them because they disagreed with his stomach, resolved to shoot himself; and then he ate three buttered muffins for breakfast, before shooting himself, knowing that he should not be troubled with indigestion: he had two charged pistols; one was found lying charged upon the table by him, after he had shot himself with the other." "Well," said Johnson, with an air of triumph, "you see here one pistol was sufficient." Beauclerk replied smartly, "Because it happened to kill him. This is what you don't know, and I do."

No more passed just then: dinner went on briskly, and the glasses went round merrily, as before.

JOHNSON [suddenly and abruptly]: "Mr. Beauclerk, how came you to talk so petulantly to me, as, 'This is what you don't know, but what I know?' One thing I know, which you don't seem to know, that you are very uncivil."—BEAUCLERK: "Because you began by being uncivil (which you always are)."

Johnson had not heard the last clause of Beauclerk's retort, and silence again ensued. The Doctor was angry, but he would take

RECONCILIATION.

time to consider whether he should give his wrath full swing. At length his will decided, and in the affirmative. There were present a young lord and a distinguished traveller, two men of the world with whom he had never dined before; and he must not allow himself to be lowered in their eyes—" he would not appear a coward" before men like these. So he lay in wait, ready to spring upon poor Beauclerk whenever opportunity offered. And he had not long to watch. The conversation soon turned upon Hackman's violence of temper.

Johnson: "It was his business to command his temper, as my friend Mr. Beauclerk should have done some time ago."—Beauclerk: "I should learn of you, Sir."—Johnson: "Sir, you have given me opportunities enough of learning, when I have been in your company. No man loves to be treated with contempt."—Beauclerk (with a polite inclination toward Johnson): "Sir, you have known me twenty years, and however I may have treated others, you may be sure I could never treat you with contempt."—Johnson: "Sir, you have said more than was necessary." And with this friendly embrace the quarrel-scene terminated. Johnson dined with Beauclerk on Saturday week, and in the breaking of bread all enmity was cast away.

Yet, at the close of a chapter which has begun and ended with an explosion of temper endangering two of the best friendships Johnson ever knew, we cannot help remarking, that if we had undertaken to prove our good Doctor a perfect man, such as, in some people's judgment, all ought to be who are worthy of having their lives written, we should certainly have broken down long ere now under the pressure of such a heavy promise: unless, indeed, we had chosen to get over the difficulty thus-by shaping our notion of perfection to suit the size of our man. But this would have been a very dishonest way of dealing with a very honest soul. It is better to let Samuel Johnson speak for himself: speak through strength and weakness, sincerity and prejudice, love and bad temper, and all the other supposed incompatibles which nevertheless seem to get on very well together, side by side, in the same character. As, through all his scrofulous scars a good eye could discern a well-formed face, so, through all the Doctor's

morbid melancholy we ought to see clearly a thoroughly healthy mind, through all his stubborn prejudices a rooted love of the truth, through all his narrow orthodoxy a deeply religious nature, and through all his objectionable outbursts a heart which was kindliness its very self: a man whose faults could do little harm because they were none of them disguised, and whose virtues could not fail to do good because they were all so pronounced; a man who made the forces of his nature tell upon his age, and who, though dead, yet speaketh—and to some purpose. "The blessed work of helping the world forward, happily does not wait to be done by perfect men: and it is more than probable that neither Luther nor John Bunyan, for example, would have satisfied the modern demand for an ideal hero, who believes nothing but what is true, feels nothing but what is exalted, and does nothing but what is graceful."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONVERSATIONS—THE DOCTOR AND THE LADIES—DEATH OF BEAUCLERK—SELF-ABASEMENT.

(1779—1780).

" to dr. johnson.

" South Audley Street,
" Monday, April 26.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I am in great pain with an inflamed foot, and obliged to keep my bed, so am prevented from having the pleasure to dine at Mr. Ramsay's to-day, which is very hard; and my spirits are sadly sunk. Will you be so friendly as to come and sit an hour with me in the evening? I am ever your most faithful

" And affectionate humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

"TO MR. BOSWELL.

" Harley Street.

"Mr. Johnson laments the absence of Mr. Boswell, and will come to him."

He went, and took Sir Joshua Reynolds with him; and poor Bozzy almost forgot that he had a foot at all, not to say an inflamed one, while they sat and discoursed by his bedside.

On Monday evening, May 2nd, Boswell set out for Scotland.

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

".May 4, 1779.

"DEAR MADAM,

"Mr. Green has informed me that you are much better; I hope I need not tell you that I am glad of it. I cannot boast of being

much better; my old nocturnal complaint still pursues me, and my respiration is difficult, though much easier than when I left you the summer before last. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale are well; Miss has been a little indisposed; but she is got well again. They have, since the loss of their boy, had two daughters; but they seem likely to want a son.

"I hope you had some books which I sent you. I was sorry for poor Mrs. Adey's death, and am afraid you will be sometimes solitary; but endeavour, whether alone or in company, to keep yourself cheerful. My friends likewise die very fast; but such is the state of man.

"I am, dear love,
"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"July 13, 1779.

"DEAR SIR,

"What can possibly have happened, that keeps us two such strangers to each other? I expected to have heard from you when you came home; I expected afterwards. I went into the country and returned, and yet there is no letter from Mr. Boswell. No ill, I hope, has happened; and if ill should happen, why should it be concealed from him who loves you? Is it a fit of humour, that has disposed you to try who can hold out longest wirhout writing? If it be, you have the victory. But I am afraid of something bad; set me free from my suspicions.

"My thoughts are at present employed in guessing the reason of your silence: you must not expect that I should tell you any thing, if I had any thing to tell. Write, pray write to me, and let me know what is, or what has been the cause of this long interruption.

"I am, dear Sin
"Your most affectionate humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

" Edinburgh, July 17, 1779.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"What may be justly denominated a supine indolence of mind has been my state of existence since I last returned to Scotland. In a livelier state I had often suffered severely from long intervals of silence on your part; and I had even been chid by you for expressing my uneasiness. I was willing to take advantage of my insensibility, and, while I could bear the experiment to try whether your affection for me would, after an unusual silence on my part, make you write first. This afternoon I have had very high satisfaction by receiving your kind letter of inquiry, for which I most gratefully thank you. I am doubtful if it was right to make the experiment; though I have gained by it. I was beginning to grow tender, and to upbraid myself, especially after having dreamt two nights ago that I was with you. I and my wife, and my four children, are all well. I would not delay one post to answer your letter; but as it is late, I have not time to do more. You shall soon hear from me, upon many and various particulars; and I shall never again put you to any test. I am, with veneration, my dear Sir.

"Your much obliged

"And faithful humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

" TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" Streatham, Sept. 9, 1779.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Are you playing the same trick again, and trying who can keep silence longest? Remember that all tricks are either knavish or childish: and that it is as foolish to make experiments upon the constancy of a friend as upon the chastity of a wife.

"What can be the cause of this second fit of silence I cannot conjecture; but after one trick I will not be cheated by another, nor will I harass my thoughts with conjectures about the motives of a man who, probably, acts only by caprice. I therefore suppose you are well, and that Mrs. Boswell is well too: and that the fine

summer has restored Lord Auchinleck. I am much better than you left me; I think I am better than when I was in Scotland.

"I forget whether I informed you that poor Thrale has been in great danger. Mrs. Thrale has miscarried, and been much indisposed. Everybody else is well; Langton is in camp.

"Mr. Thrale goes to Brighthelmstone about Michaelmas, to be jolly and ride a-hunting. I shall go to town, or perhaps to Oxford. Exercise or gaiety, or rather carelessness, will, I hope, dissipate all remains of his malady; and I likewise hope, by the change of place, to find some opportunities of growing yet better myself. I am, dear Sir,

"Your humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Circumstances brought Boswell to London a second time this same year; and on Monday, October 4th, he found himself by the Doctor's bed-side. But let not the mention of our Author's bed-side raise visions of sickness in our readers' imaginations: the Doctor was not ill; he was only not up. "Frank," he cried, with all the sprightliness of a youth of twenty springs, "go and get coffee, and let us breakfast in splendour."

The conversational results of this visit, which but extended over a fortnight, we shall present in one view.

Boswell: "By associating with you, Sir, I am always getting an accession of wisdom. But perhaps a man, after knowing his own character—the limited strength of his own mind—should not be desirous of having too much wisdom, considering—quid valeant humeri—how little he can carry."—Johnson: "Sir, be as wise as you can: let a man be aliis latus, sapiens sibi:

'Though pleased to see the dolphins play, I mind my compass and my way.'

You may be wise in your study in the morning, and gay in company at a tavern in the evening. Every man is to take care of his own wisdom and his own virtue, without minding too much what others think."

JOHNSON: "Dodsley first mentioned to me the scheme of an English Dictionary; but I had long thought of it."—Boswell:

"You did not know what you were undertaking."—JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, I knew very well what I was undertaking—and very well how to do it,—and have done it very well."—Boswell: "An excellent climax! and it has availed you. In your Preface you say, 'What would it avail me in this gloom of solitude?' You have been agreeably mistaken."

When dining at Mr. Ramsay's one day, with Lord Newhaven and others, Johnson was favoured with some very delicate attentions from a certain "beautiful Miss Graham," who asked him to hob or nob with her. The Doctor was charmed, but politely informed the lady that he drank no wine; adding, however, that if she would pledge him in water he was quite at her service. She agreed.

"Oh, Sir," said Lord Newhaven, "you are caught."— JOHNSON: "Nay, I do not see how I am caught; but if I am caught, I don't want to get free again. If I am caught I hope to be kept." Then, when the two glasses of water were brought, he said, smiling placidly to the young lady, "Madam, let us reciprocate."

Is not this the very poetry of etiquette? It is almost as exquisite as one of Burns's love-songs.

And here is another little episode quite as good: Miss Monckton (afterwards Countess of Cork) insisted one evening that some of Sterne's writings were very pathetic. This Johnson bluntly denied. "I am sure," said she, "they have affected me." "Why," said Johnson, smiling and rolling himself about, "that is, because, dearest, you're a dunce." When she some time afterwards mentioned this to him, he said, "Madam, if I had thought so, I certainly should not have said it."

But here is even more delicious complimenting: A Miss Williams used to tell that once, when in the Doctor's company, she was asked to sit down beside him, and, upon inquiring how he was, received this courtly reply: "I am very ill indeed, Madam. I am very ill even when you are near me; what should I be were you at a distance?"

Yet here is one which seems still finer: Miss Adams, daughter of his friend the Doctor, happened to tell Johnson one evening

that a little coffee-pot in which she had just made him some coffee was the only thing in the house she could call her own. Our gallant Doctor turned to her and said: "Don't say so, my dear; I hope you don't reckon my heart as nothing."

How the record of such delicious scenes must gall those who have staked their credit on making out that our dear Doctor was only a kind of half-civilised human bear!

Lord Newhaven and our Author debated upon a certain political subject, but the nobleman respectfully said: "I speak with great deference to you, Dr. Johnson; I speak to be instructed." This compliment went right home: the Doctor bowed his head almost as low as the table, to a nobleman who could flatter so gracefully, calling out: "My Lord, my Lord, I do not desire all this ceremony; let us tell our minds to one another quietly." After the debate was over, he said, "I have got lights on the subject to-day, which I had not before." My Lord's compliment had done good service, then.

Boswell proposed that they two should make a tour to Ireland.

Johnson: "It is the last place where I should wish to travel."

—Boswell: "Should you not like to see Dublin, Sir?"—Johnson: "No, Sir; Dublin is only a worse capital."—Boswell: "Is not the Giant's Causeway worth seeing?"—Johnson: "Worth seeing? Yes; but not worth going to see."

Yet he wished the Irish well too, after his fashion—having, on one occasion, said earnestly to a gentleman of that nation, "Do not make an union with us, Sir; we should unite with you, only to rob you. We should have robbed the Scotch, if they had had anything of which we could have robbed them."

A foreign minister, of no great abilities, having sat in Johnson's company for a long time without notice, at last happened, fortunately for him, to remark that he had read some of the "Rambler" in Italian and admired it much. After this lucky observation the despised minister's very lightest word was received with a courtly rejoinder such as this,—"the Ambassador says well"—"His Excellency observes"—and forthwith the Doctor would

"THE AMBASSADOR SAYS WELL."

369

proceed to expand and enrich the other's trite remarks till they looked like wisdom's own voice, and the minister himself quite lost his own children. The company were mightily amused; and "The Ambassador says well" became a proverb among Johnson's friends, and was never wanting whenever any little thought was seen trying to envelope itself in a cloud of great words.

All these little scenes and incidents are interesting and important, beyond their first promise even, as throwing floods of light upon the *details* of Johnson's daily life: of such cloth was the web of it composed.

Here is a noble letter of sympathy from our Author to a friend on the death of his wife. We see in it the Doctor's own old wound bleeding afresh: his Tetty was by his side as he wrote:—

"TO DR. LAWRENCE.

" Јапиату 20, 1780.

"DEAR SIR,

"At a time when all your friends ought to show their kindness, and with a character which ought to make all that know you your friends, you may wonder that you have yet heard nothing from me.

"I have been hindered by a vexatious cough, for which within these ten days I have been bled once, fasted four or five times, taken physic five times, and opiates, I think, six. This day it seems to remit.

"The loss, dear Sir, which you have lately suffered, I felt many years ago, and know, therefore, how much has been taken from you, and how little help can be had from consolation. He that outlives a wife whom he has loved, sees himself disjointed from the only mind that has the same hopes, and fears, and interest; from the only companion with whom he has shared much good or evil; and with whom he could set his mind at liberty, to retrace the past or anticipate the future. The continuity of being is lacerated; the settled course of sentiment and action is stopped; and life stands suspended and motionless, till it is driven by external causes into a new channel. But the time of suspense is dreadful.

"Our first recourse, in this distressed solitude, is, perhaps for want of habitual piety, to a gloomy acquiescence in necessity. Of two mortal beings, one must lose the other; but surely there is a higher and better comfort to be drawn from the consideration of that Providence which watches over all, and a belief that the living and the dead are equally in the hands of God, who will reunite those whom he has separated; or who sees that it is best not to reunite.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate

"And most humble servant, "Sam. Johnson."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" April 8, 1780.

"DEAR SIR,

"Well, I had resolved to send you the Chesterfield letter; but I will write once again without it. Never impose tasks upon mortals. To require two things is the way to have them both undone.

"Poor dear Beauclerk,—nec, ut soles, dabis joca. His wit and his folly, his acuteness and maliciousness, his merriment and reasoning, are now over. Such another will not often be found among mankind. He directed himself to be buried by the side of his mother—an instance of tenderness which I hardly expected. He has left his children to the care of Lady Di, and if she dies, of Mr. Langton, and of Mr. Leicester, his relation, and a man of good character. His library has been offered for sale to the Russian Ambassador.

"Poor Mr. Thrale has been in extreme danger from an apoplectical disorder, and recovered, beyond the expectation of his physicians; he is now at Bath, that his mind may be quiet; and Mrs. Thrale and Miss are with him.

"Having told you what has happened to your friends, let me say something to you of yourself. You are always complaining of melancholy, and I conclude from those complaints that you are fond of it. No man talks of that which he is desirous to conceal,

and every man desires to conceal that of which he is ashamed. Do not pretend to deny it; manifestum habenus furem; make it an invariable and obligatory law to yourself, never to mention your own mental diseases: if you are never to speak of them you will think on them but little, and if you think little of them, they will molest you rarely. When you talk of them, it is plain that you want either praise or pity; for praise there is no room, and pity will do you no good: therefore, from this hour speak no more, think no more, about them.

"Please to make my compliments to your lady, and to the young ladies. I should like to see them, pretty loves.

" I am, dear Sir,

"Yours affectionately,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Beauclerk died on the 11th of March, 1780. Another friend gone! While he was suffering under the disease which ultimately cut him off, Johnson had said to Langton, with a faltering voice, " Sir, I would walk to the extent of the diameter of the earth to save Beauclerk!" That "faltering voice" meant much; for Johnson was no demonstrative man. And Beauclerk's death he characterised, in his own grand way of dealing out his judgments, as "a loss that perhaps the whole nation could not repair!" another time he declared that he had felt himself more disposed to envy Beauclerk's talents than those of any other man he knew. Then he would give some admirable photographs of his dead friend, such as nobody but himself could produce; and with one of the finest of these we shall leave poor Beauclerk to his repose. "No man was ever so free, when he was going to say a good thing, from a look that expressed that it was coming; or, when he had said it, from a look that expressed that it had come." That is beautiful praise.

About this time the famous "Gordon Riots" broke out in the metropolis, some account of which Johnson has left in his letters to Mrs. Thrale, who, with her husband and family, were then from home. But as these Riots are matter of general history, it is unnecessary to do more than mention them here.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" London, Aug. 21, 1780.

" DEAR SIR,

"I find you have taken one of your fits of taciturnity, and have resolved not to write till you are written to; it is but a peevish humour, but you shall have your way.

"I have sat at home in Bolt-court all the summer, thinking to write the Lives, and a great part of the time only thinking. Several of them, however, are done, and I still think to do the rest.

"Mr. Thrale and his family have, since his illness, passed their time first at Bath, and then at Brighthelmstone; but I have been at neither place. I would have gone to Lichfield if I could have had time, and I might have had time if I had been active; but I have missed much and done little.

"In the late disturbances, Mr. Thrale's house and stock were in great danger; the mob was pacified at their first invasion, with about 50% in drink and meat; and at their second, were driven away by the soldiers. Mr. Strahan got a garrison into his house, and maintained them a fortnight; he was so frighted that he removed part of his goods. Mrs. Williams took shelter in the country.

"I know not whether I shall get a ramble this autumn: it is now about the time when we were travelling. I have, however, better health than I had then, and hope you and I may yet show ourselves on some part of Europe, Asia, or Africa. [What has become of America?] In the mean time let us play no trick, but keep each other's kindness by all means in our power.

"I suppose your little ladies are grown tall; and your son has become a learned young man. I love them all, and I love your naughty lady, whom I never shall persuade to love me. When the Lives are done, I shall send them to complete her collection, but must send them in paper, as, for want of a pattern, I cannot bind them to fit the rest.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours most affectionately, "SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" October 17, 1780.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am sorry to write you a letter that will not please you, and yet it is at last what I resolve to do. This year must pass without an interview; the summer has been foolishly lost, like many other of my summers and winters. I hardly saw a green field, but stayed in town to work without working much.

"Mr. Thrale's loss of health has lost him the election; he is now going to Brighthelmstone, and expects me to go with him; how long I shall stay, I cannot tell. I do not much like the place, but yet I shall go, and stay while my stay is desired. We must, therefore, content ourselves with knowing what we know as well as man can know the mind of man, that we love one another, and that we wish each other's happiness, and that the lapse of a year cannot lessen our mutual kindness.

"I was pleased to be told that I accused Mrs. Boswell unjustly, in supposing that she bears me ill-will. I love you so much, that I would be glad to love all that love you, and that you love; and I have love very ready for Mrs. Boswell, if she thinks it worthy of acceptance. I hope all the young ladies and gentlemen are well.

"You lately told me of your health; I can tell you in return, that my health has been, for more than a year past, better than it has been for many years before. Perhaps it may please GoD to give us some time together before we are parted.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours most affectionately,

"Sam. Johnson."

Mr. Macbean, who has been mentioned already as one of Johnson's humble friends, being now oppressed by age and poverty, the Doctor had solicited Lord Chancellor Thurlow to have him admitted into the Charter-House. He received the following reply:—

"TO DOCTOR SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"London, October 24, 1780.

"SIR.

"I have this moment received your letter, dated the 19th, and returned from Bath.

"In the beginning of the summer I placed one in the Chartreux, without the sanction of a recommendation so distinct and so authoritative as yours of Macbean; and I am afraid that, according to the establishment of the House, the opportunity of making the charity so good amends will not soon recur. But whenever a vacancy shall happen, if you'll favour me with notice of it, I will try to recommend him to the place, even though it should not be my turn to nominate.

"I am, Sir, with great regard,

"Your most faithful

"And obedient servant,
"THURLOW."

"TO THE REVEREND DOCTOR VYSE, AT LAMBETH.

" December 30, 1780.

"SIR.

"I hope you will forgive the liberty I take, in soliciting your interposition with his Grace the Archbishop: my first petition was successful, and I therefore venture on a second.

"The matron of the Chartreux is about to resign her place, and Mrs. Desmoulins, a daughter of the late Dr. Swinfen, who was well known to your father, is desirous of succeeding her. She has been accustomed, by keeping a boarding school, to the care of children, and I think is very likely to discharge her duty. She is in great distress, and therefore may probably receive the benefit of a charitable foundation. If you wish to see her, she will be willing to give an account of herself.

"If you shall be pleased, Sir, to mention her favourably to his Grace, you will do a great act of kindness to,

"Sir, your most obliged

"And most humble Servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Thus the old man moves on in the seemingly quiet round of his daily life, doing many little acts of mercy as he goes—scattering at every step almost the divine seed of some beautiful unostentatious deed. Yet here are two sentences from his Meditations on his last birthday,—sentences which make one reflect for a moment:—

"I am now beginning the seventy-second year of my life, with more strength of body, and greater vigour of mind, than I think is common at that age. * * * Surely I shall not spend my whole life with my own total disapprobation."

Those touching letters, then, on behalf of poor friends who have appealed to him to whom the needy never appeal in vain, have not come back as sunshine to brighten the closing days of the writer of them. Here is a man who, at seventy years of age, gave the world the first half of a work which will last while our language holds together, and who, in the course of a few months, will be ready with the rest: a man whose every word almost is a wise saying and whose every letter is a kind act—and yet this man's deepest thought and most inward feeling is, that he has done, and is doing, nothing; that he is an unprofitable servant at the best. Let us see to it that we estimate aright those stern selfupbraidings; that we discern in them the fruit of the man's true nobility of soul; that we recognise in them his strongest claim to a place among the immortals—who all toiled and saw not the result, fought and fell without knowing on which side the victory lay, laboured hard and sorrowed heavily through all the years. "There's many a good bit of work done with a sad heart."

CHAPTER XXXIX

"LIVES OF THE POETS" CONCLUDED—CHARACTERISTIC LETTER—
THE DOCTOR AN EXECUTOR—CONVERSATIONS.

(1781.)

"Some time in March (1781) I finished 'The Lives of the Poets,' which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste.
Written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety."

This was Johnson's last and greatest contribution to the literature of our country; and it is a masterly piece of work. Written at any period of our Author's life it must have been called a triumph of mind, but, conceived of as written at the age of threescore years and ten, it must be held a triumph of mind over matter. It is the sharpest, clearest, fullest, richest, and easiest of all the Doctor's writings: the ripest fruit of his massive intellect and great heart. It is not a mere book made; it is a great work done. It is a noble series of philosophical discussions, moral paintings, and critical dissertations all combined: a body of literary biography in the strictest sense of the word. We should be willing to stake our Author's credit as the intellectual hero of his time on this work alone.

The lives of Cowley, Dryden, Pope, Milton, and Savage are specially admirable.

We admit that a few of the authors have, though only in one or two respects, received scant justice from their biographer. The Doctor has certainly been unfair to the poetry of Gray and to the politics of Milton: he did not understand the one, and he did not like the other. But, on the whole, we must claim for these "Lives of the Poets" the merit of grand impartiality, in addition to all

their other excellences. What Johnson said of those who assailed him at the time for his alleged injustice to one or two of the poets, he would have repeated now as a sufficient answer to more recent objectors: "Sir, I considered myself as entrusted with a certain portion of truth. I have given my opinion sincerely: let them show where they think me wrong." But even then all sounds of blame were quickly drowned by loud applause; and any condemnatory judgments of our own time would be still more easily put down. As the Doctor himself says magnificently in a letter to Mrs. Thrale: "The blaze of reputation cannot be blown out, but it often dies in the socket; a very few names may be considered as perpetual lamps that shine unconsumed." And his is one of those ever-burning flames, which cannot be blown out, and has no chance of dying in the socket.

In the February of this year Boswell wrote to Johnson complaining of having been vexed by a recurrence of a question that troubled him often—that of Liberty and Necessity—and mentioning that he hoped to meet the Doctor soon in London. The Doctor's reply is brief, but thoroughly characteristic:—

" TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" March 14, 1781.

" DEAR SIR.

"I hoped you had got rid of all this hypocrisy of misery. What have you to do with Liberty and Necessity? Or what more than to hold your tongue about it? Do not doubt but I shall be most heartily glad to see you here again, for I love every part about you but your affectation of distress.

"I have at last finished my Lives, and have laid up for you a load of copy, all out of order, so that it will amuse you a long time to set it right. Come to me, my dear Bozzy, and let us be as happy as we can. We will go again to the Mitre, and talk old times over.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours affectionately,

"Sam. Johnson."

Two sentences of this little letter ought to be written in gold:

" What have you to do with Liberty and Necessity? Or what more than to hold your tongue about it?"

But Necessity and Liberty both combined to take Boswell periodically to London: it seemed to be necessary that he should resolve to go, and then he luckily found himself at liberty to carry out his resolution.

On the last occasion he had found his friend in bed: this time he met him walking in Fleet Street. The Doctor's walk was peculiar, and has been thus described: "When he walked the streets, what with the constant roll of his head and the concomitant motion of his body, he appeared to make his way by that motion, independent of his feet." He was usually much stared at as he moved along, but his large size effectually checked all tendency to laughter. Mr. Langton saw him one day, in a fit of absent-mindedness, inadvertently drive the load off a porter's back. and then walk briskly on as if nothing had happened. The porter was mightily enraged, and had evidently thoughts of following to take his revenge, but he looked again at the retreating figure and decided he had better not.

Speaking of the Doctor's walk reminds us of another remarkable peculiarity of his which we shall let Boswell describe: "This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot (I am not certain which) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture; for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected, or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion."

When the two friends met in Fleet Street that day they were hurrying in different directions; so Boswell could only promise to call on the morrow. The Doctor said he was engaged to go out in the morning. "Early, Sir?"—"Why, Sir, a London morning does not go with the sun."

The Thrales had removed from the Borough to Grosvenor Square, presumably for Mr. Thrale's health; and there Boswell met the Doctor soon after his arrival in London. A playful sally of Burke's upon Dean Marlay was quoted: "I don't like the Deanery of Ferns," he had said, "it sounds so like a barren title." Boswell had proposed that "Dr. Heath should have it." Johnson [graciously contracting himself to smaller people's dimensions] was pleased to suggest Dr. Moss.

While the Doctor is in this playful mood we may venture to quote a *Charade* he once made on his friend Dr. Barnard:—

CHARADE.

"My first shuts out thieves from your house or your room, My second expresses a Syrian perfume.

My whole is a man in whose converse is shared,
The strength of a Bar and the sweetness of Nard."

It was said of a member of parliament sitting upon an election committee that he read the newspapers or slept while the merits of a vote were being examined by the counsel, and that when challenged by the chairman for his improper behaviour, he bluntly answered, "I had made up my mind upon that case." Johnson, with indignant contempt, said, "If he was such a rogue as to make up his mind upon a case without hearing it, he should not have been such a fool as to tell it." "I think," said Mr. Dudley Long, "the Doctor has pretty plainly made him out to be both rogue and fool."

Friday, March 30th: SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS'S.

Boswell mentioned the Doctor's scale of liquors:—claret for boys,—port for men,—brandy for heroes. "Then," said Mr. Burke, "let me have claret: I love to be a boy; to have the careless gaiety of boyish days."—Johnson: "I should drink claret too, if it would give me that; but it does not: it neither makes boys men, nor men boys. You'll be drowned by it, before it has any effect upon you."

A ludicrous paragraph had appeared in the newspapers recently, stating that Dr. Johnson was taking dancing-lessons from Vestris. A secret conclave having been held by several members of the party, it was decided, by a great majority, that it was safe to venture an inquiry of the Doctor himself.

LORD CHARLEMONT [courteously]: "Pray, Sir, is it true that you are taking lessons of Vestris?"-Johnson [startled, and a little angry]: "How can your lordship ask so simple a question?" But he caught the humour of the joke and went on: "Nay, but if anybody were to answer the paragraph, and contradict it, I'd have a reply, and would say, that he who contradicted it was no friend either to Vestris or me. For why should not Dr. Johnson add to his other powers a little corporeal agility? Socrates learned to dance at an advanced age, and Cato learned Greek at an advanced age. Then it might proceed to say, that this Johnson, not content with dancing on the ground, might dance on the rope; and they might introduce the elephant dancing on the rope. A nobleman wrote a play, called 'Love in a Hollow Tree.' found out that it was a bad one, and therefore wished to buy up all the copies, and burn them. The Duchess of Marlborough had kept one; and when he was against her at an election, she had a new edition of it printed, and prefixed to it, as a frontispiece, an elephant dancing on a rope; to show that his lordship's writing comedy was as awkward as an elephant dancing on a rope."

April 1st: MR. THRALE'S.

Mrs. Thrale praised Mr. Dudley Long.

Johnson: "Nay, my dear lady, don't talk so. Mr. Long's character is very short. It is nothing. He fills a chair. He is a man of genteel appearance, and that is all. I know nobody who blasts by praise as you do: for whenever there is exaggerated praise, everybody is set against a character. They are provoked to attack it. Now there is Pepys; you praised that man with such disproportion, that I was incited to lessen him, perhaps more than he deserves. His blood is upon your head. By the same principle, your malice defeats itself; for your censure is too violent. And yet [looking to her with a leering smile] she is

the first woman in the world, could she but restrain that wicked tongue of hers; she would be the only woman, could she but command that little whirligig."

Later in the evening the same subject was resumed.

MRS. THRALE: "You think so of Mr. Long, Sir, because he is quiet, and does not exert himself with force. You'll be saying the same thing of Mr. —— there, who sits as quiet—"—JOHNSON: "Nay, Madam, what right have you to talk thus? Both Mr. —— and I have reason to take it ill. You may talk so of Mr. ——; but why do you make me do it? Have I said anything against Mr. ——? You have set him that I might shoot him; but I have not shot him."

One of the gentlemen said he had seen three folio volumes of Dr. Johnson's sayings collected by Boswell. "I must put you right, Sir," said Boswell, "for I am very exact in authenticity. You could not see folio volumes, for I have none: you might have seen some in quarto and octavo. This is an inattention which one should guard against."—Johnson: "Sir, it is a want of concern about veracity. He does not know that he saw any volumes. If he had seen them he could have remembered their size."

On Wednesday, April 4th, Mr. Thrale's long illness closed in death. "I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect and benignity." Mr. Thrale had left a legacy of 200l. to each of his executors, and had appointed our Author one of these; but, contrary to a very general expectation, he had made him no other bequest. The Doctor, however, was very proud of his small commission, and talked of his new office in a very pompous strain—particularly of the affairs of the brewery, which, it was at last resolved, should be sold. While the sale was going on, Johnson kept bustling about with an ink-horn and pen in his button-hole, like the exciseman he so cordially detested; and when asked what he thought the property was really worth, answered: "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of

avarice." With all our good Doctor's learning, shrewdness, force of character, he was yet, in some respects, as simple and artless as dear Parson Adams, or Doctor Primrose, or Sir Roger de Coverley, or Uncle Toby, or any other of those beautiful childmen of literature, whose queer-looking virtues and innocent foibles have come down the ages like a quaint procession of moral odd-fellows.

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

" London, April 12, 1781.

"DEAR MADAM,

"Life is full of troubles. I have just lost my dear friend Thrale. I hope he is happy; but I have had a great loss. I am otherwise pretty well. I require some care of myself, but that care is not ineffectual; and when I am out of order, I think it often my own fault.

"The spring is now making quick advances. As it is the season in which the whole world is enlivened and invigorated, I hope that both you and I shall partake of its benefits. My desire is to see Lichfield: but being left executor to my friend, I know not whether I can be spared; but I will try, for it is now long since we saw one another, and how little we can promise ourselves many more interviews, we are taught by hourly examples of mortality. Let us try to live so as that mortality may not be an evil. Write to me soon, my dearest; your letters will give me great pleasure.

"Be so kind as to make my compliments to my friends; I have a great value for their kindness, and hope to enjoy it before summer is past. Do write to me.

"I am, dearest love,

"Your most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

On Good Friday, April 13th, Boswell and the Doctor went to St. Clement Danes together, as usual. There they again met Johnson's old fellow-collegian, Edwards.

Boswell: "I think, Sir, Dr. Johnson and you meet only at

church."—EDWARDS: "Sir, it is the best place we can meet in, except heaven, and I hope we shall meet there too." Johnson afterwards mentioned that there had been little communication between them since their first unexpected reunion: "But," said he, smiling, "he met me once, and said, 'I am told you have written a very pretty book called 'The Rambler.' I was unwilling that he should leave the world in total darkness, and sent him a set."

Sunday, April 15th: Johnson's House.

Johnson on this occasion produced, for the first time, some handsome silver salvers which he had bought fourteen years ago: so this Easter-Sunday was a day to mark. Mr. Allen, a printer of small stature, amused the company greatly by doing his very best to talk in the Doctor's big manner—"the little frog in the fable blowing himself up to resemble the stately ox."

In the course of the evening, in reply to some remark of the Doctor's, Mrs. Williams and another lady took up the word together and endeavoured to shriek him down. He got into a passion, and cried, "Nay, when you both speak at once, it is intolerable." But he immediately checked himself, and, in a softened voice, added, "This one may say, though you are ladies." And then he gaily addressed them in the words of one of the songs in the "Beggars' Opera,"

"But two at a time no mortal can bear."

Had all stories of the Doctor's rudeness been as well carried as this one, we should have seen, in almost every case, the roughnesses shading off into something quite as sweet and graceful and delicious as the above. An apology so cleverly and delicately made would have atoned for a much heavier offence.

Friday, April 20th: MRS. GARRICK'S.

Speaking of a certain gentleman who had already been pretty roughly handled, one of the female guests remarked, "I doubt he was an atheist."—Johnson: "I don't know that. He might perhaps have become one, if he had had time to ripen (smiling). He might have exuberated into an atheist."

Sir Joshua Reynolds praised Mudge's Sermons.

JOHNSON: "Mudge's Sermons are good, but not practical. He grasps more sense than he can hold; he takes more corn than he can make into meal; he opens a wide prospect, but it is so distant, it is indistinct. I love 'Blair's Sermons.' Though the dog is a Scotchman, and a Presbyterian, and everything he should not be, I was the first to praise them. Such was my candour "(smilirg).—Mrs. Boscawen: "Such his great merit, to get the better of all your prejudices."—Johnson: "Why, Madam, let us compound the matter; let us ascribe it to my candour and his merit."

The Doctor, on more occasions than one, laid claim to the possession of great candour. "Well, Sir," said a friend to him one day, "I will always say that you are a very candid man."—"Will you?" replied the Doctor; "I doubt then you will be very singular. But indeed, Sir," continued he, "I look upon myself to be a man very much misunderstood. I am not an uncandid, nor am I a severe man. I sometimes say more than I mean, in jest: and people are apt to believe me serious? however, I am more candid than I was when I was younger. As I know more of mankind, I expect less of them, and am ready now to call a man a good man, upon easier terms than I was formerly."

Here is a fine instance of the Doctor's candour in action. A gentleman and he had a sharp debate at a late hour one evening: the Doctor was on the wrong side, and, though he seemed more than 'half-conscious of the fact, would not give in. But, next morning, when the combatants of the evening before met in the breakfast-room, Johnson went up to the other and said: "Sir, I have been thinking over our dispute last night—you were in the right."

But the immortal part of that evening at Mrs. Garrick's is here. Talking of a very respectable author, the Doctor told the company that he had married a printer's devil.

REYNOLDS: "A printer's devil, Sir! Why, I thought a printer's devil was a creature with a black face and in rags."—Johnson: "Yes, Sir. But I suppose he had her face washed, and put clean clothes on her. [Then, looking very serious and very

TENDER MEMORIES.

385

earnest.] And she did not disgrace him:—the woman had a bottom of good sense." The word we have italicised, coming in such a connection, tickled the company's sense of fun quite to the laughing-point. A Reverend Bishop who was present did indeed keep his countenance, as became his calling; but Mrs. Hannah More had to hide her face behind another lady's back and have her titter out freely under cover. This was not to be endu ed by our solemn Doctor. "Where's the merriment?" he cried. "I say the woman was fundamentally sensible." The audience was silent as death.

At the close of the evening Boswell and the Doctor left the house together. Stopping for a moment by the rails of the Adelphi, looking on the Thames, the former said, with some emotion: "I am now thinking of two friends we have lost, who once lived in the buildings behind us—Beauclerk and Garrick."—JOHNSON [tenderly]: "Ay, Sir, and two such friends as cannot be supplied."

"Nature repairs her ravages—repairs them with her sunshine, and with human labour. . . . Nature repairs her ravages—but not all. The uptorn trees are not rooted again; the parted hills are left scarred. If there is a new growth, the trees are not the same as the old, and the hills underneath their green vesture bear the marks of the past rending. To the eyes that have dwelt on the past, there is no thorough repair."

CHAPTER XL.

JOHNSON REVISITS SCENES OF YOUTH—DEATH OF MR. LEVETT
—ELEGY—SICK AT HEART.

(1781-1782.)

THE first few days of June the Doctor passed in a visit to Bedfordshire, to Squire Dilly the elder, brother of his friends the booksellers in the Poultry. This visit was varied by an excursion to Luton Hoe, the magnificent seat of Lord Bute. When shown the botanical garden, the Doctor asked, "Is not every garden a botanical garden?" When told that there was a shrubbery to the extent of several miles: "That is making a very foolish use of the ground: a little of it is very well." When it was proposed that they should walk on the pleasure-ground: "Don't let us fatigue ourselves. Why should we walk there? Here's a fine tree, let's get to the top of it." But upon the whole he was very much pleased. He said, "This is one of the places I do not regret having come to see. It is a very stately place indeed; in the house magnificence is not sacrificed for convenience, nor convenience to magnificence. The library is very splendid; the dignity of the rooms is very great; and the quantity of pictures is beyond expectation—beyond hope."

On the fifth of June Johnson returned to London, having spent two or three very pleasant days in this country ramble. Rural nature never threw the Doctor into raptures; but he enjoyed it nevertheless in his own way—though he took a kind of wicked delight in concealing his satisfaction.

RESOLUTIONS.

387

"TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

" June 23, 1781.

"DEAR SIR.

"It was not before yesterday that I received your splendid benefaction. To a hand so liberal in distributing I hope nobody will envy the power of acquiring.

"I am, dear Sir,
"Your obliged
"And most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Johnson's own liberality to the distressed was extraordinary; he gave largely and made no fuss about it: it was neither his creed nor his practice to shed maudlin tears over misery and want, but, in a prompt manly way, he was constantly soothing the one and relieving the other. And he would beg, too, from his friends when his own pockets were empty—as appears from the letter just quoted.

Yet, when not called upon to give, a strong desire to keep would at times get the better of him. Boswell confessed to him one day that he "was occasionally troubled with a fit of narrowness." "Why, Sir," said Johnson, "so am I, but I do not tell it." He would now and then borrow a shilling from his friend, and, when asked for it again, would seem rather out of humour. Once he said, "Boswell, lend me sixpence—not to be repaid." Johnson's is one of the richest characters on record.

- "August 9, 3 p.m. ætat. 72, in the summer-house at Streatham.
- "After innumerable resolutions formed and neglected, I have retired hither, to plan a life of great diligence, in hope that I may yet be useful, and be daily better prepared to appear before my Creator and my Judge, from whose infinite mercy I humbly call for assistance and support.
 - " My purpose is,
 - "To pass eight hours every day in some serious employment.
- "Having prayed, I purpose to employ the next six weeks upon the Italian language, for my settled study."

In the autumn he went to Oxford, Birmingham, Lichfield, and Ashbourne: "The motives of my journey I hardly know; I omitted it last year, and am not willing to miss it again." But he goes on to evolve out of his consciousness sufficient reasons for this impulse to visit his native place once more: "Hector is likewise an old friend, the only companion of my childhood that passed through school with me. We have always loved one another; perhaps we may be made better by some serious conversation, of which, however, I have no distinct hope." And again: "At Lichfield, my native place, I hope to show a good example by frequent attendance on public worship."

The old man had better go, reason or no reason; for the time is short.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" DEAR SIR.

"January 5, 1782.

"I sit down to answer your letter on the same day in which I received it, and am pleased that my first letter of the year is to you. No man ought to be at ease while he knows himself in the wrong; and I have not satisfied myself with my long silence. The letter relating to Mr. Sinclair, however, was, I believe, never brought.

"My health has been tottering this last year; and I can give no very laudable account of my time. I am always hoping to do better than I have ever hitherto done.

"My journey to Ashbourne and Staffordshire was not pleasant; for what enjoyment has a sick man visiting the sick? Shall we ever have another frolic like our journey to the Hebrides?

"I hope that dear Mrs. Boswell will surmount her complaints. In losing her you will lose your anchor, and be tost, without stability, by the waves of life. I wish both her and you very many years, and very happy.

"For some months past I have been so withdrawn from the world, that I can send you nothing particular. All your friends, however, are well, and will be glad of your return to London.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours most affectionately,

"Sam. Johnson."

DEATH OF LEVETT.

389

That is a sad letter: the Doctor's pilgrimage to the scenes of his youth has not made him feel himself younger. The shadows are lengthening towards the close of a long day.

"TO DR. LAWRENCE.

"January 17, 1782.

"SIR.

"Our old friend Mr. Levett, who was last night eminently cheerful, died this morning. The man who lay in the same room, hearing an uncommon noise, got up and tried to make him speak, but without effect. He then called Mr. Holder, the apothecary, who, though when he came he thought him dead, opened a vein, but could draw no blood. So has ended the long life of a very useful and very blameless man.

"I am, Sir,
"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"January 20, Sunday. Robert Levett was buried in the churchyard of Bridewell, between one and two in the afternoon. He died on Thursday 17, about seven in the morning, by an instantaneous death. He was an old and faithful friend; I have known him from about 46. Commendavi. May God have mercy on him. May He have mercy on me."

> "Condemned to Hope's delusive mine, As on we toil from day to day, By sudden blast or slow decline Our social comforts drop away.

Well try'd through many a varying year, See LEVETT to the grave descend; Officious, innocent, sincere, Of every friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,
Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind,
Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny
Thy praise to merit unrefined.

When fainting Nature call'd for aid,
And hov'ring Death prepared the blow,
His vigorous remedy display'd
The power of art without the show.

In Misery's darkest caverns known,
His ready help was ever nigh,
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely Want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by chill delay, No petty gains disdain'd by pride; The modest wants of every day The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round, Nor made a pause, nor left a void; And sure the eternal Master found His single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;
His frame was firm, his powers were bright,
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then, with no throbs of fiery pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the nearest way."

A sweeter tribute never was paid to the memory of a man. Wordsworth is right: strong and deep feeling makes us all poets; and Johnson's feeling, when he wrote these verses, was both strong and deep—beyond expression in aught but song.

Yet, in the midst of all this sorrow—which is very real, and this sense of loneliness—which is profound, we come upon the following serio-comic entry in one of the Doctor's diaries of this year:—

"Jan. 20. The ministry is dissolved. I prayed with Francis, and gave thanks."

Johnson's was a big heart; there was room in it at any one moment for many feelings which most people can only accommodate at separate times.

LETTERS TO LUCY PORTER.

391°

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

"London, March 2, 1782.

"DEAR MADAM,

"I went away from Lichfield ill, and have had a troublesome time with my breath; for some weeks I have been disordered by a cold, of which I could not get the violence abated, till I had been let blood three times. I have not, however, been so bad but that I could have written, and am sorry that I neglected it.

"My dwelling is but melancholy; both Williams and Desmoulins and myself are very sickly: Frank is not well; and poor Levett died in his bed the other day, by a sudden stroke; I suppose not one minute passed between health and death; so uncertain are human things.

"Such is the appearance of the world about me; I hope your scenes are more cheerful. But whatever befalls us, though it is wise to be serious, it is useless and foolish, and perhaps sinful, to be gloomy. Let us, therefore, keep ourselves as easy as we can; though the loss of friends will be felt, and poor Levett had been a faithful adherent for thirty years.

"Forgive me, my dear love, the omission of writing; I hope to mend that and my other faults. Let me have your prayers.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Cobb, and Miss Adey, and Mr. Pearson, and the whole company of my friends.

"I am, my dear,

"Your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO THE SAME.

"Bolt Court, Fleet Street, March 19, 1782.

"DEAR MADAM,

"My last was but a dull letter, and I know not that this will be much more cheerful; I am, however, willing to write, because you are desirous to hear from me.

"My disorder has now begun its ninth week, for it is not yet over. I was last Thursday blooded for the fourth time, and have since found myself much relieved, but I am very tender, and easily hurt; so that since we parted I have had but little comfort,

but I hope that the spring will recover me, and that in the summer I shall see Lichfield again; for I will not delay my visit another year to the end of autumn.

"I have, by advertising, found poor Mr. Levett's brothers in Yorkshire, who will take the little he has left: it is but little, yet it will be welcome, for I believe they are of very low condition.

"To be sick, and see nothing but sickness and death, is but a gloomy state; but I hope better times, even in this world, will come, and whatever this world may withhold or give, we shall be happy in a better state. Pray for me, my dear Lucy.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Cobb, and Miss Adey, and my old friend Hetty Bailey, and to all the Lichfield ladies.

"I am, dear Madam,

"Yours affectionately,

"Sam. Johnson."

On the same day on which the above letter was written the following found its way into the Doctor's "Prayers and Meditations":—

"Poor Lawrence has almost lost the sense of hearing; and I have lost the conversation of a learned, intelligent, and communicative companion, and a friend whom long familiarity has much endeared. Lawrence is one of the best men whom I have known. 'Nostrum omnium, miserere Deus.'"

Sorrow only drew this man closer to his kind; as all sorrow does which is not selfish despair. Johnson was one of the most intensely human men that ever lived—a social being in every sense-

"TO CAPTAIN LANGTON, IN ROCHESTER.

" Bolt Court, Fleet Street, March 20, 1782.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is now long since we saw one another; and, whatever has been the reason, neither you have written to me, nor I to you. To let friendship die away by negligence and silence is certainly not wise. It is voluntarily to throw away one of the greatest comforts of this weary pilgrimage, of which when it is, as it must be, taken finally away, he that travels on alone will wonder how his esteem could be so little. Do not forget me; you see that I

do not forget you. It is pleasing, in the silence of solitude, to think that there is one at least, however distant, of whose benevolence there is little doubt, and whom there is yet hope of seeing again.

"Of my life, from the time we parted, the history is mournful. The spring of last year deprived me of Thrale, a man whose eye for fifteen years had scarcely been turned upon me but with respect or tenderness; for such another friend the general course of human things will not suffer man to hope. I passed the summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale; and having idled away the summer with a weakly body and neglected mind, I made a journey to Staffordshire on the edge of winter. The season was dreary; I was sickly, and found the friends sickly whom I went to After a sorrowful sojourn, I returned to a habitation possessed for the present by two sick women, where my dear old friend, Mr. Levett, to whom, as he used to tell me, I owe your acquaintance, died a few weeks ago, suddenly in his bed. passed not, I believe, a minute between health and death. night, as, at Mrs. Thrale's, I was musing in my chamber, I thought with uncommon earnestness, that however I might alter my code of life, or whithersoever I might remove, I would endeavour to retain Levett about me. In the morning my servant brought me word that Levett was called to another state, a state for which, I think, he was not unprepared, for he was very useful to the poor. How much soever I valued him, I now wish that I had valued him more.

"I have myself been ill more than eight weeks of a disorder, from which, at the expense of about fifty ounces of blood, I hope I am now recovering.

"You, dear Sir, have, I hope, a more cheerful scene; you see George fond of his book, and the pretty Misses airy and lively, with my own little Jenny equal to the best; and in whatever can contribute to your quiet or pleasure, you have Lady Rothes ready to concur. May whatever you enjoy of good be increased, and whatever you suffer of evil be diminished.

"I am, dear Sir, your humble servant,

"SAM, JOHNSON."

"TO MR. HECTOR, IN BIRMINGHAM.

" London, March 21, 1782.

"DEAR SIR,

"I hope I do not very grossly flatter myself to imagine that you and dear Mrs. Careless will be glad to hear some account of me. I performed the journey to London with very little inconvenience, and came safe to my habitation, where I found nothing but ill-health, and, of consequence, very little cheerfulness. I then went to visit a little way into the country, where I got a complaint by a cold which has hung eight weeks upon me, and from which I am, at the expense of fifty ounces of blood, not yet free. I am afraid I must once more owe my recovery to warm weather, which seems to make advances towards us.

"Such is my health, which will, I hope, soon grow better. In other respects I have no reason to complain. I know not that I have written anything more generally commended than the 'Lives of the Poets;' and have found the world willing enough to caress me, if my health had invited me to be much in company; but this season I have been almost wholly employed in nursing myself.

"When summer comes I hope to see you again, and will not put off my visit to the end of the year. I have lived so long in London, that I did not remember the difference of seasons.

"Your health, when I saw you, was much improved. You will be prudent enough not to put it in danger. I hope, when we meet again, we shall congratulate each other upon fair prospects of longer life: though what are the pleasures of the longest life, when placed in comparison with a happy death?

"I am, dear Sir, yours most affectionately,

"Sam. Johnson."

Here is a cheery letter—half-amusing—which comes very opportunely to relieve the unbroken gloom of so many previous ones.

" TO MR. PERKINS.

" July 28, 1782.

"DEAR SIR.

- "I am much pleased that you are going a very long journey, which may, by proper conduct, restore your health and prolong your life.
 - "Observe these rules:-
- " 1. Turn all care out of your head as soon as you mount the chaise.
- "2. Do not think about frugality; your health is worth more than it can cost.
 - "3. Do not continue any day's journey to fatigue.
 - "4. Take now and then a day's rest.
 - "5. Get a smart sea-sickness if you can.
 - "6. Cast away all anxiety, and keep your mind easy.
- "7. This last direction is the principal; with an unquiet mind, neither exercise, nor diet, nor physic, can be of much use.
- "I wish you, dear Sir, a prosperous journey, and a happy recovery.

"I am, dear Sir,
"Your most affectionate humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" August 24, 1782.

"DEAR SIR,

"Being uncertain whether I should have any call this autumn into the country, I did not immediately answer your kind letter. I have no call; but if you desire to meet me at Ashbourne, I believe I can come thither; if you had rather come to London, I can stay at Streatham: take your choice.

"This year has been very heavy. From the middle of January to the middle of June I was battered by one disorder after another! I am now very much recovered, and hope still to be better. What happiness it is that Mrs. Boswell has escaped.

"My 'Lives' are reprinting, and I have forgotten the author of

Gray's character. Write immediately, and it may be perhaps yet inserted.

"Of London or Ashbourne you have your free choice; at any place I shall be glad to see you.

"I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.,

"Sam. Johnson."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" London, Sept. 7, 1782.

"DEAR SIR,

- "I have struggled through this year with so much infirmity of body, and such strong impressions of the fragility of life, that death, whenever it appears, fills me with melancholy; and I cannot hear without emotion of the removal of any one, whom I have known, into another state.
- "Your father's death had every circumstance that could enable you to bear it; it was at a mature age, and it was expected; and as his general life had been pious, his thoughts had doubtless for many years past been turned upon eternity. That you did not find him sensible must doubtless grieve you; his disposition towards you was undoubtedly that of a kind, though not of a fond, father. Kindness, at least actual, is in our power, but fondness is not; and if by negligence or imprudence you had extinguished his fondness, he could not at will rekindle it. Nothing then remained between you but mutual forgiveness of each other's faults, and mutual desire of each other's happiness.
 - "I shall long to know his final disposition of his fortune.
- "You, dear Sir, have now a new station, and have therefore new cares and new employments. Life, as Cowley seems to say, ought to resemble a well-ordered poem; of which one rule generally received is, that the exordium should be simple, and should promise little. Begin your new course of life with the least show, and the least expense possible; you may at pleasure increase both, but you cannot easily diminish them. Do not think your estate your own, while any man can call upon you for money which you cannot pay; therefore begin with timorous parsimony. Let it be your first care not to be in any man's debt.

"When the thoughts are extended to a future state, the present life seems hardly worthy of all those principles of conduct, and maxims of prudence, which one generation of men has transmitted to another; but upon a closer view, when it is perceived how much evil is produced, and how much good is impeded, by embarrassment and distress, and how little room the expedients of poverty leave for the exercise of virtue, it grows manifest that the boundless importance of the next life enforces some attention to the interest of this.

"Be kind to the old servants, and secure the kindness of the agents and factors; do not disgust them by asperity, or unwelcome gaiety, or apparent suspicion. From them you must learn the real state of your affairs, the characters of your tenants, and the value of your lands.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell; I think her expectations from air and exercise are the best that she can form. I hope she will live long and happily.

"I forgot whether I told you that Rasay has been here; we dined cheerfully together. I entertained lately a young gentleman from Corrichatachin.

"I received your letters only this morning.

"I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.,

"Sam. Johnson."

"DR. JOHNSON TO MRS, BOSWELL.

" London, Sept. 7, 1782.

"DEAR LADY.

"I have not often received so much pleasure as from your invitation to Auchinleck. The journey thither and back is, indeed, too great for the latter part of the year; but if my health were fully recovered, I would suffer no little heat and cold, nor a wet or a rough road, to keep me from you. I am, indeed, not without hope of seeing Auchinleck again; but to make it a pleasant place I must see its lady well, and brisk, and airy. For my sake, therefore, among many greater reasons, take care, dear Madam, of your health, spare no expense, and want no attendance that can procure ease, or preserve it. Be very careful to keep your mind

quiet: and do not think it too much to give an account of your recovery to, Madam, "Yours, &c., "Sam. Johnson."

Mr. Thrale's death had made a serious difference in Johnson's relation to that family. The band that had kept the whole together was broken; and although a correspondence of a sort was maintained for some time longer, the old familiar dealings were for ever over. Old gentlemen get troublesome, and fine ladies get tired.

Accordingly, on the 6th of October, 1782, we find the Doctor making "a parting use of the library" at Streatham, and uttering a prayer composed "on leaving Mr. Thrale's family":—

"Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when Thou givest, and when Thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me.

"To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

And in one of his memorandum-books we come upon the following tender little record:—" Sunday, went to church at Streatham." Templo valedixi cum osculo" [I said farewell to the church with a kiss].

CHAPTER XLI.

ILL AND ILL-TEMPERED—CONVERSATIONS—STRUCK DUMB—DEATH OF MRS. WILLIAMS.

(1783.)

On Friday, March 21st, 1783, Boswell arrived in London, and found the Doctor sadly out of sorts. "I am glad you are come," he said; "I am very ill." And a rather unruly patient he appeared to be: for Sir Lucas Pepys, the physician, who happened to visit him while Boswell was present, was constrained to say, "If you were tractable, Sir, I should prescribe for you." But his friend's talk did the Doctor more good than his physician's medicines; so much so that he at length cried out, "You must be with me as much as you can. You have done me good. You cannot think how much better I am since you came in."

After a fit of musing, he again said, "I wonder how I should have any enemies; for I do harm to nobody."—Boswell: "In the first place, Sir, you will be pleased to recollect, that you set out with attacking the Scotch; so you got a whole nation for your enemies."—Johnson: "Why, I own, that by my definition of oats I meant to vex them."—Boswell: "Pray, Sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch?"—Johnson: "I cannot, Sir."—Boswell: "Old Mr. Sheridan says, it was because they sold Charles the First."—Johnson: "Then, Sir, old Mr. Sheridan has found out a very good reason."

On Saturday Boswell called again, and found the patient in a horrible humour. On being told that General Oglethorpe had said he would pay him a visit in the evening, the Doctor shouted, "Did not you tell him not to come? Am I to be hunted in this manner?"

On Sunday morning his mood was slightly improved, he having got a little rest over-night by the help of an opiate. temper was still delicately poised, and not much would be needed to move the balance the wrong way. That little was contributed by Mrs. Desmoulins and Boswell, in a talk which they had expressive of their surprise at the Doctor's abstinence from complaint against the world for not taking more notice of him. flew into a violent passion, and ordered them to hold their "Nobody," cried he, "has a right to talk in this manner, to bring before a man his own character, and the events of his life, when he does not choose it should be done. have sought the world: the world was not to seek me. rather wonderful that so much has been done for me. All the complaints which are made of the world are unjust. knew a man of merit neglected: it was generally by his own fault that he failed of success. A man may hide his head in a hole: he may go into the country, and publish a book now and then, which nobody reads, and then complain he is neglected. There is no reason why any person should exert himself for a man who has written a good book: he has not written it for any individual. I may as well make a present to a postman who brings me a letter. When patronage was limited an author expected to find a Mæcenas, and complained if he did not find one. Why should he complain? This Mæcenas has others as good as he, or others who have got the start of him."—Boswell: "But surely, Sir, you will allow that there are men of merit at the bar who never get practice."-Johnson: "Sir, you are sure that practice is got from an opinion that the person employed deserves it best; so that if a man of merit at the bar does not get practice, it is from error, not from injustice. He is not neglected. A horse that is brought to market may not be bought, though he is a very good horse: but that is from ignorance, not from intention."

In the evening, neither health nor temper seemed improved. A gentleman asked him whether he had been abroad to-day. "Don't talk so childishly," said he. "You may as well ask if I hanged myself to-day." Boswell mentioned politics. Johnson:

"Sir, I'd as soon have a man to break my bones as talk to me of public affairs, internal or external. I have lived to see things all as bad as they can be."

Well or ill, however, Johnson never was unwilling to perform his character of literary man; for we find him about this time revising, very carefully and good-naturedly, Crabbe's poem, "The Village."

This illness was only temporary, and not serious: otherwise we should have written very differently of the little bursts of tempor breaking through it; we should not have joked at their expense.

About the middle of April, he wrote to Mrs. Lucy Porter, mentioning his bad health, and stating that he proposed to visit Lichfield soon. But the times are terribly uncertain: he had better not set his heart upon such a journey this year.

In spite of age and gathering infirmities, the mind of the man was still clear and strong as ever, and his talk as rich and ready as it had been twenty years before. Johnson's was the *genius* of conversation.

Take one or two specimens from this period of his life.

Dr. Brocklesby mentioned a respectable gentleman who became extremely penurious towards the close of his life. Johnson said there must have been a degree of madness about him. "Not at all, Sir," said Brocklesby; "his judgment was entire." But he happened to state a little afterwards that, though this gentleman had a fortune of £2,700, he denied himself many comforts from the fear that he could not afford them. The Doctor had him now: "Nay, Sir," he cried, "when the judgment is so disturbed that a man cannot count, that is pretty well."

The tour to the Hebrides was mentioned.

JOHNSON: "I got an acquisition of more ideas by it than by anything that I remember. I saw quite a different system of life."—Boswell: "You would not like to make the same journey again?"—JOHNSON: "Why, no, Sir; not the same: it is a tale told. Gravina, an Italian critic, observes, that every man desires to see that of which he has read; but no man desires to read an account of

what he has seen: so much does description fall short of reality. Description only excites curiosity: seeing satisfies it. Other people may go and see the Hebrides."

He talked of Dr. Dodd. "A friend of mine," said he, "came to me, and told me, that a lady wished to have Dr. Dodd's picture in a bracelet, and asked me for a motto. I said, I could think of no better than Currat Lex [let the law run its course]. I was very willing to have him pardoned; that is, to have the sentence changed to transportation; but, when he was once hanged, I did not wish he should be made a saint."

JOHNSON: "I do not see, Sir, that fighting is absolutely forbidden in scripture; I see revenge forbidden, but not self-defence." -Boswell: "The Quakers say it is; 'Unto him that smiteth thee on one cheek, offer him also the other."-Johnson: "But stay, Sir; the text is meant only to have the effect of moderating passion; it is plain that we are not to take it in a literal sense. We see this from the context, where there are other recommendations. which I warrant you the Quaker will not take literally; as, for instance, 'From him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away.' Let a man whose credit is bad, come to a Quaker, and say, 'Well, Sir, lend me a hundred pounds;' he will find him as unwilling as any other man. No, Sir, a man may shoot the man who invades his character, as he may shoot him who attempts to break into his house. So in 1745, my friend, Tom Cumming the Quaker, said he would not fight, but he would drive an ammunition cart; and we know that the Quakers have sent flannel waistcoats to our soldiers, to enable them to fight better."

Upon being told that old Mr. Sheridan, indignant at the neglect of his oratorical plans, had threatened to go to America:—Johnson: "I hope he will go to America."—Boswell: "The Americans don't want oratory." — Johnson: "But we can want Sheridan."

On one of these evenings, however, Boswell having mentioned that he had that morning been with old Mr. Sheridan, the Doctor's real kindliness of heart sprang to life, and he said warmly: "Tell Mr. Sheridan I shall be glad to see him, and shake hands with him."

—Boswell: "It is to me very wonderful that resentment should be kept up so long."—Johnson: "Why, Sir, it is not altogether resentment that he does not visit me; it is partly falling out of the habit,—partly disgust, as one has at a drug that has made him sick. Besides, he knows that I laugh at his oratory."

Boswell talked of living in the country.

JOHNSON: "Don't set up for what is called hospitality: it is a waste of time, and a waste of money; you are eaten up, and not the more respected for your liberality. If your house be like an inn nobody cares for you. A man who stays a week with another, makes him a slave for a week."—Boswell: "But there are people, Sir, who make their houses a home to their guests, and are themselves quite easy."—JOHNSON: "Then, Sir, home must be the same to the guests, and they need not come."

It was asked, whether a man naturally virtuous, or one who has evercome wicked inclinations, is the best.

JOHNSON: "Sir, to you, the man who has overcome wicked inclinations, is not the best. He has more merit to himself: I would rather trust my money to a man who has no hands, and so a physical impossibility to steal, than to a man of the most honest principles. There is a witty satirical story of Foote. He had a small bust of Garrick placed upon his bureau. "You may be surprised," said he, "that I allow him to be so near my gold;—but, you will observe, he has no hands."

Speaking of one who was said to be a very learned man:-

JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; he has a great deal of learning; but it never lies straight. There is never one idea by the side of another; 'tis all entangled: and then he drives it so awkwardly upon conversation!"

A public man talked of retiring into private life.

JOHNSON: "Never think of that."—GENTLEMAN: "I should then do no ill."—JOHNSON: "Nor no good either. Sir, it would be a civil suicide."

But in the following the very soul of the Doctor's character

seems to stand out in bold relief. Johnson upon cant is well worth hearing, for no man had a better right to condemn it.

Boswell: "I wish much to be in Parliament, Sir."-Johnson: "Why, Sir, unless you come resolved to support any administration, you would be the worse for being in Parliament, because you would be obliged to live more expensively."-Boswell: "Perhaps, Sir, I should be the less happy for being in Parliament. never would sell my vote, and I should be vexed if things went wrong."—Johnson: "That's cant, Sir. It would not vex you more in the house than in the gallery: public affairs vex no man." -Boswell: "Have not they vexed yourself a little, Sir? Have not you been vexed by all the turbulence of this reign, and by that absurd vote of the House of Commons, 'That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished?' "-Johnson: "Sir, I have never slept an hour less, nor eaten an ounce less meat. I would have knocked the factious dogs on the head, to be sure; but I was not vexed."—Boswell: "I declare, Sir, upon my honour, I did imagine I was vexed, and took a pride in it; but it was, perhaps, cant; for I own I neither ate less, nor slept less."—Johnson: "My dear friend, clear your mind of cant. You may talk as other people do: you may say to a man, 'Sir, I am your most humble servant.' You are not his humble servant. You may say, 'These are bad times; it is a melancholy thing to be reserved to such times.' You don't mind the times. You tell a man, 'I am sorry you had such bad weather the last day of your journey, and were so much wet.' You don't care sixpence whether he is wet or dry. You may talk in this manner; it is a mode of talking in society: but don't think foolishly."

But there was in Johnson, as there is in us all, something else than mind—something warring against mind: and that invisible enemy, having worked underground for a long while, at last came to the surface, on the 17th of June (1783). On the morning of that day the Doctor found his grand stream of talk suddenly checked at the source —

"TO MR. EDMUND ALLEN.

" June 17, 1783.

"DEAR SIR,

"It has pleased God, this morning, to deprive me of the powers of speech; and as I do not know but that it may be his farther good pleasure to deprive me soon of my senses, I request you will, on the receipt of this note, come to me, and act for me, as the exigencies of my case may require.

"I am, sincerely yours,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO THE REVEREND DR. JOHN TAYLOR.

" June 17, 1783.

"DEAR SIR,

"It has pleased God, by a paralytic stroke in the night, to deprive me of speech.

"I am very desirous of Dr. Heberden's assistance, as I think my case is not past remedy. Let me see you as soon as it is possible. Bring Dr. Heberden with you, if you can; but come yourself at all events. I am glad you are so well, when I am so dreadfully attacked.

"I think that by a speedy application of stimulants much may be done. I question if a vomit, vigorous and rough, would not rouse the organs of speech to action. As it is too early to send, I will try to recollect what I can, that can be suspected to have brought on this dreadful distress.

"I have been accustomed to bleed frequently for an asthmatic complaint, but have forborne for some time by Dr. Pepys's persuasion, who perceived my legs beginning to swell. I sometimes alleviate a painful, or, more properly, an oppressive, constriction of my chest, by opiates; and have lately taken opium frequently, but the last, or two last times, in smaller quantities. My largest dose is three grains, and last night I took but two. You will suggest these things (and they are all that I can call to mind) to Dr. Heberden.

"I am, &c.,
"Sam. Johnson."

406 TOUCHING ACCOUNT OF HIS STROKE.

Two days after, he wrote this very interesting and affecting account of his stroke to Mrs. Thrale:—

"On Monday, the 16th, I sat for my picture (to Miss Reynolds), and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up, as has been long my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God, that however he might afflict my body, he would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good: I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

"Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself, when it should come, would excite less horror than seems now to attend it.

"In order to rouse the vocal organs, I took two drams. Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence. I put myself into violent motion, and I think repeated it; but all was vain. I then went to bed, and, strange as it may seem, I think slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech, he left me my hand; I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now, perhaps, overlooks me as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands.

"I then wrote a card to Mr. Allen, that I might have a discreet friend at hand, to act as occasion should require. In penning this note, I had some difficulty; my hand, I knew not how nor why, made wrong letters. I then wrote to Dr. Taylor to come to me, and bring Dr. Heberden: and I sent to Dr. Brocklesby, who is my neighbour. My physicians are very friendly, and give me great hopes; but you may imagine my situation. I have so far

recovered my vocal powers as to repeat the Lord's Prayer with no very imperfect articulation. My memory, I hope, yet remains as it was: but such an attack produces solicitude for the safety of every faculty."

"I prayed God that however He might afflict my body, He would spare my understanding." Let the reader mark that: it is not death this man fears—it is dissolution he shrinks from. Samuel Johnson would fain leave the world with his soul entire; and he will—but not yet for a while. Is there not something interesting—touching, even—in the fact that it was the Doctor's speech only that failed him?

Among all the expressions of sympathy and offers of assistance which Johnson in his hour of trouble received, that which perhaps went straightest to his heart was Mrs. Davies's generous proposal to come and wait upon him—a proposal which called forth the following beautiful letter of acknowledgment:—

"TO MR. THOMAS DAVIES.

" June 18, 1783.

" DEAR SIR,

"I have had, indeed, a very heavy blow; but God, who yet spares my life, I humbly hope will spare my understanding, and restore my speech. As I am not at all helpless, I want no particular assistance, but am strongly affected by Mrs. Davies's tenderness; and when I think she can do me good, shall be very glad to call upon her. I had ordered friends to be shut out, but one or two have found their way in; and if you come, you shall be admitted; for I know not whom I can see that will bring more amusement or his tongue, or more kindness in his heart.

" I am, &c.,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Go when he may, this hero of ours will take a sound heart with him to the grave: but his hour is not yet come.

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

" London, July 5, 1783.

"DEAR MADAM,

"The account which you give of your health is but melancholy.

May it please God to restore you. My disease affected my speech, and still continues, in some degree, to obstruct my utterance; my voice is distinct enough for a while; but the organs, being still weak, are quickly weary; but in other respects I am, I think, rather better than I have lately been; and can let you know my state without the help of any other hand.

"In the opinion of my friends, and in my own, I am gradually mending. The physicians consider me as cured; and I had leave four days ago to wash the cantharides from my head. Last Tuesday I dined at the Club.

"I am going next week into Kent, and propose to change the air frequently this summer; whether I shall wander so far as Staffordshire I cannot tell. I should be glad to come. Return my thanks to Mrs. Cobb and Mr. Pearson, and all that have shown attention to me.

"Let us, my dear, pray for one another, and consider our sufferings as notices mercifully given us to prepare ourselves for another state.

"I live now but in a melancholy way. My old friend Mr. Levett is dead, who lived with me in the house, and was useful and companionable; Mrs. Desmoulins is gone away; and Mrs. Williams is so much decayed, that she can add little to another's gratifications. The world passes away, and we are passing with it; but there is, doubtless, another world, which will endure for ever. Let us all fit ourselves for it.

"I am, &c.,
"Sam. Johnson."

In July he paid a visit to Mr. Langton, at Rocheser, where he stayed about a fortnight, making little excursions in the neighbourhood with as much ease as ever. His general constitution was magnificent, and in the strength of that he had recovered thus soon from his late attack.

But his return from Kent was to a very dreary home. Writing to Mrs. Thrale on the 13th of August, he says:—

"I am now broken with disease, without the alleviation of familiar friendship or domestic society: I have no middle state

between clamour and silence, between general conversation and self-tormenting solitude. Levett is dead, and poor Williams is making haste to die: I know not if she will ever more come out of her chamber."

And again, on the 26th :-

"Mrs. Williams fancies now and then that she grows better; but her vital powers appear to be slowly burning out. Nobody thinks, however, that she will very soon be quite wasted, and as she suffers me to be of very little use to her, I have determined to pass some time with Mr. Bowles, near Salisbury, and have taken a place for Thursday.

"Some benefit may be perhaps received from change of air, some from change of company, and some from mere change of place. It is not easy to grow well in a chamber where one has long been sick, and where everything seen, and every person speaking, revives and impresses images of pain. Though it be true that no man can run away from himself, yet he may escape from many causes of useless uneasiness. That the mind is its own place, is the boast of a fallen angel that had learned to lie. External locality has great effects, at least upon all embodied beings. I hope this little journey will afford me at least some suspense of melancholy."

On the day appointed, he took his proposed journey to Mr. Bowles's, and, immediately on his arrival there, wrote to Dr. Brocklesby the following letter:—

"TO DR. BROCKLESBY.

" Heale, near Salisbury.
" Aug. 29, 1783.

"DEAR SIR,

"Without appearing to want a just sense of your kind attention, I cannot omit to give an account of the day which seemed to appear in some sort perilous. I rose at five, and went out at six; and, having reached Salisbury about nine, went forward a few miles in my friend's chariot. I was no more wearied with the journey, though it was a high-hung, rough coach, than I should have been forty years ago. We shall now see what air will do. The country

is all a plain: and the house in which I am, so far as I can judge from my windows, for I write before I have left my chamber, is sufficiently pleasant.

"Be so kind as to continue your attention to Mrs. Williams; it is great consolation to the well, and still greater to the sick, that they find themselves not neglected; and I know that you will be desirous of giving comfort, even where you have no great hope of giving help.

"Since I wrote the former part of the letter, I find that by the course of the post I cannot send it before the thirty-first.

" I am, &c.,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

While here, he received the news of Mrs. Williams's death; an event of which he shortly afterwards wrote to Mrs. Thrale in these few and simple words—every word like the print of a tear:— "Poor Williams has, I hope, seen the end of her afflictions. She acted with prudence, and she bore with fortitude. She has left me.

'Then thy weary task hast done, Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages,'"

CHAPTER XLII.

A DESOLATED HOME—NEW CLUB FOUNDED—"A PIOUS NEGOTIA-TION"—ANOTHER FAREWELL.

On his return from Heale, Johnson wrote to Dr. Burney:—"I came home on the 18th of September, at noon, to a very disconsolate house. You and I have lost our friends; but you have more friends at home. My domestic companion is taken from me. She is much missed, for her acquisitions were many, and her curiosity universal; so that she partook of every conversation. I am not well enough to go much out; and to sit, and eat, or fast alone, is very wearisome. I always mean to send my compliments to all the ladies."

The paralysis had been got over: but he was now suffering severely from the gout and another complaint which threatened to require a surgical operation.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ.

" London, Sept. 29, 1783.

"DEAR SIR,

"You may very reasonably charge me with insensibility of your kindness and that of Lady Rothes, since I have suffered so much time to pass without paying any acknowledgment. I now, at last, return my thanks; and why I did it not sooner I ought to tell you. I went into Wiltshire as soon as I well could, and was there much employed in palliating my own malady. Disease produces much selfishness. A man in pain is looking after ease; and lets most other things go as chance shall dispose of them.

412 "WE THAT ARE LEFT MUST CLING CLOSER."

In the meantime I have lost a companion, to whom I have had recourse for domestic amusement for thirty years, and whose variety of knowledge never was exhausted; and now return to a habitation vacant and desolate. I carry about a very troublesome and dangerous complaint which admits no cure but by the chirurgical knife. Let me have your prayers.

"I am, &c.,
"Sam. Johnson."

After all, however, "the chirurgical knife" was not called into requisition; the trouble having abated without amputation.

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

" Bolt Court, Fleet Street, Nov. 10, 1783.

"DEAR MADAM,

"The death of poor Mr. Porter, of which your maid has sent an account, must have very much surprised you. The death of a friend is almost always unexpected: we do not love to think of it, and therefore are not prepared for its coming. He was, I think, a religious man, and therefore that his end was happy.

"Death has likewise visited my mournful habitation. Last month died Mrs. Williams, who had been to me for thirty years in the place of a sister: her knowledge was great, and her conversation pleasing. I now live in cheerless solitude.

"My two last years have passed under the pressure of successive diseases. I have lately had the gout with some severity. But I wonderfully escaped the operation which I mentioned, and am upon the whole restored to health beyond my own expectation.

"As we daily see our friends die round us, we that are left must cling closer, and, if we can do nothing more, at least pray for one another; and remember, that as others die we must die too, and prepare ourselves diligently for the last great trial.

"I am, Madam,

"Yours affectionately,

"Sam. Johnson."

To say that distress tries friends is trite, but it is not therefore unnecessary to record that Johnson's friends, one and all, nobly stood the test. The Honourable Gerard Hamilton, for example, sent to Dr. Brocklesby inquiring whether this long illness had brought his patient into pecuniary difficulties, and offering to supply whatever might be needed. This generous offer was acknowledged in the following letter:—

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM GERARD HAMILTON.

" November 19, 1783.

"DEAR SIR,

"Your kind inquiries after my affairs, and your generous offers, have been communicated to me by Dr. Brocklesby. I return thanks with great sincerity, having lived long enough to know what gratitude is due to your friendship; and entreat that my refusal may not be imputed to sullenness or pride. I am, indeed, in no want. Sickness is, by the generosity of my physicians, of little expense to me. But if any unexpected exigence should press me, you shall see, dear Sir, how cheerfully I can be obliged to so much liberality.

"I am, Sir,
"Your most obedient and most humble Servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

Johnson was only sad when he could not help it: he was not like philosopher Jacques, who thought himself a fine fellow simply because he was always moping. Even in the midst of those dismal days the social element in the Doctor was constantly getting the better of all his sorrows. He passionately loved his kind; and, in order to secure for himself company on three evenings every week, he instituted, about this time, a Club at the Essex Head, in Essex Street, then kept by one Samuel Greaves, an old servant of Mr. Thrale's. This letter to Sir Joshua Reynolds will give all the account of the Club which we here require:—

" Dec. 4, 1783.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is inconvenient to me to come out; I should else have waited on you with an account of a little evening Club which we are establishing in Essex-street, in the Strand, and of which you are desired to be one. It will be held at the Essex Head, now kept by an old servant of Thrale's. The company is numerous, and, as you will see by the list, miscellaneous. The terms are lax, and the expenses light. Mr. Barry was adopted by Dr. Brocklesby, who joined with me in forming the plan. We meet thrice a week, and he who misses forfeits threepence.

"If you are willing to become a member, draw a line under your name. Return the list. We meet for the first time on Monday at eight.

"I am, &c.,
"Sam. Johnson."

Johnson, in his Dictionary, has defined a Club to be "an assembly of good fellows, meeting under certain conditions." The conditions of this new Club the Doctor himself drew up, heading them with a quotation from Milton:—

"To-day deep thoughts with me resolve to drench In mirth, which after no repenting draws."

But, although he had the pleasure of founding this association of "good fellows," he was not permitted to enjoy many of their meetings. About the middle of December he was seized with a spasmodic asthma of such violence that he was confined to the house for months after, and in great pain—being obliged sometimes to sit up all night in his chair, a recumbent position rendering respiration almost impossible. This trouble was further complicated by a dropsy that accompanied it. The winter also was severe; his household solitude intense; and not even the visits of his friends, which he never discouraged in his worst hours, could dispel the cloud of sad memories that arose with every look at the empty chairs of his two dead companions, who had gone and left him alone.

"DEATH, MY DEAR, IS VERY DREADFUL" 415

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

" Feb. 23, 1784.

" My DEAREST LOVE,

"I have been extremely ill of an asthma and dropsy, but received, by the mercy of God, sudden and unexpected relief last Thursday, by the discharge of twenty pints of water. Whether I shall continue free, or shall fill again, cannot be told. Pray for me.

"Death, my dear, is very dreadful: let us think nothing worth our care but how to prepare for it; what we know amiss in ourselves let us make haste to amend, and put our trust in the mercy of God, and the intercession of our Saviour.

"I am, dear Madam,

"Your most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

"TO THE REV. DR. TAYLOR, ASHBOURNE, DERBYSHIRE.

" London, Easter Monday, April 12, 1784.

"DEAR SIR,

"What can be the reason that I hear nothing from you? I hope nothing disables you from writing. What I have seen, and what I have felt, gives me reason to fear everything. Do not omit giving me the comfort of knowing, that after all my losses I have yet a friend left.

"I want every comfort. My life is very solitary and very cheerless. Though it has pleased God wonderfully to deliver me from the dropsy, I am yet very weak, and have not passed the door since the 13th of December. I hope for some help from warm weather, which will surely come in time.

"I could not have the consent of the physicians to go to church yesterday: I therefore received the holy sacrament at home, in the room where I communicated with dear Mrs. Williams, a little before her death. O, my friend, the approach of death is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid. It is vain to look round and round for that help which cannot be had. Yet we hope and hope, and

fancy that he who has lived to-day may live to-morrow. But let us learn to derive our hope only from God.

"In the mean time, let us be kind to one another. I have no friend now living but you and Mr. Hector, that was the friend of my youth. Do not neglect, dear Sir, yours affectionately,

"Sam, Johnson."

"In the mean time, let us be kind to one another." Yes! "More helpful than all wisdom is one draught of human pity that will not forsake us."

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

" London, April 26, 1784.

"MY DEAR,

"I write to you now, to tell you that I am so far recovered, that on the 21st I went to church, to return thanks, after a confinement of more than four long months.

"My recovery is such as neither myself nor the physicians at all expected, and is such as that very few examples have been known of the like. Join with me, my dear love, in returning thanks to God.

"Dr. Vyse has been with [me] this evening: he tells me that you likewise have been much disordered, but that you are now better. I hope that we shall some time have a cheerful interview. In the mean time let us pray for one another.

"I am, Madam, your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Here is a beautiful little letter which the Doctor wrote to his godchild, Jenny Langton, a girl seven years old. He wrote it in a large round hand, almost like print, that the child might have the pleasure of reading it for herself.

"TO MISS JANE LANGTON, IN ROCHESTER, KENT.

" May 10, 1784.

"MY DEAREST MISS JENNY,

"I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long without being answered; but, when I am not pretty well, I do not always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see

that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle; for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected; and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetic; and, above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers, and read your Bible.

"I am, my dear, your most humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

The aged Doctor is still a child at heart.

Boswell came to town in May; and on the third of June he and our Author set out for Oxford, on a visit to Dr. Adams. Their fellow-passengers in the coach were two ladies, a mother and daughter, bound for Worcestershire. The elder lady, after looking at the way-bill and reading the name Dr. Johnson, whispered to Boswell, "Is this the great Dr. Johnson?" Being answered in the affirmative, she was all ears from that moment. The Doctor spoke a great deal, and so charmingly, that the young Miss said to Boswell, in a rapturous "aside," "How he does talk! Every sentence is an essay." She amused herself on the journey with knotting: "Next to mere idleness," said Johnson, "I think knotting is to be reckoned in the scale of insignificance; though I once attempted to learn knotting. Dempster's sister [looking to Boswell] endeavoured to teach me it; but I made no progress."

The Doctor talked as freely about his own affairs in a stage-coach as if he had been sitting in his own room in Bolt Court. He said once to Langton, "I think I am like Squire Richard in 'The Journey to London,' I'm never strange in a strange place."

"I have," he now remarked, "about the world, I think, above a thousand pounds, which I intend shall afford Frank an annuity of seventy pounds a year."

At the inn where they stopped Johnson astonished the ladies by manifesting a very un-philosopher-like indignation against the roast mutton which they had for dinner. He scokled the waiter declaring, "It is as bad as bad can be: it is ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-drest." What a woeful catalogue of ill properties!

The Doctor's spirits rose as he and his friend approached the city of his Alma Mater. Frank and a coach were in readiness when our travellers arrived, and they soon found themselves within the hospitable walls of Dr. Adams's abode.

Johnson good-humouredly gave the Doctor's household the narrative of his recent illness, and ended gaily with a quotation from Swift—

"Nor think on our approaching ills, And talk of spectacles and pills."

Here he spent two weeks very pleasantly with his old friend: some of the conversational results of the visit will be found in our next chapter.

"TO MRS. THRALE.

" June 20, 1784.

"I returned last night from Oxford, after a fortnight's abode with Dr. Adams, who treated me as well as I could expect or wish; and he that contents a sick man, a man whom it is impossible to please, has surely done his part well."

It occurred to some of Johnson's friends about this time that a journey to Italy might possibly improve his health, as it would certainly elevate his spirits. But, judging that our Author's own means were insufficient to enable him to make this tour in a manner becoming the first literary man of his age, Boswell, after a consultation with Sir Joshua Reynolds, resolved to write to Lord Chancellor Thurlow, begging him to use his influence to have the Doctor's pension raised, or a grant of money made him. Thurlow was chosen rather than any other member of the government because of Johnson's high regard for the Lord Chancellor—of whom he had once said, "I would prepare myself for no man in England except Lord Thurlow. When I am to meet with him, I should wish to know a day before."

About a week after Boswell wrote, the following answer was received:—

" TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ,

" June 28.

"SIR.

"I should have answered your letter immediately, if (being much engaged when I received it) I had not put it in my pocket, and forgot to open it till this morning.

"I am much obliged to you for the suggestion; and I will adopt and press it as far as I can. The best argument, I am sure, and I hope it is not likely to fail, is Dr. Johnson's merit.—But it will be necessary, if I should be so unfortunate as to miss seeing you, to converse with Sir Joshua on the sum it will be proper to ask,—in short, upon the means of setting him out. It would be a reflection on us all, if such a man should perish for want of the means to take care of his health.

"Yours, &c.,
"Thurlow."

The whole negotiation had been conducted hitherto without the slightest knowledge or even suspicion of it on our Author's part; but it was judged proper to disclose the secret now. Boswell was commissioned to break the information to him—which he did on the day after the receipt of Thurlow's letter.

Boswell: "I am very anxious about you, Sir, and particularly that you should go to Italy for the winter, which I believe is your own wish."—Johnson: "It is, Sir."—Boswell: "You have no objection, I presume, but the money it would require."—Johnson: "Why, no, Sir."

Boswell here gave a minute account of the whole transaction, and finished by reading aloud the Lord Chancellor's letter. The Doctor listened attentively, and then cried warmly, "This is taking prodigious pains about a man." "O, Sir," said Boswell tenderly, "your friends would do everything for you." The old man paused, grew more and more agitated, and at last burst into tears, exclaiming, "God bless you all,"—and, after a short silence, adding fervently, "God bless you all for Jesus Christ's sake." Then he suddenly rose and quitted the room—to deal with his emotion alone. The Doctor has wept before now; but the tears meant sorrow then: this time they mean gratitude and love.

The day after this Boswell left for Scotland. Johnson and he had been dining together at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, talking hopefully over the expected Italian tour, and planning great things. Boswell accompanied his friend, in Sir Joshua's coach, to the entry of Bolt Court; but he did not go into the house—fearing lest he should break down. They bade adieu to each other in the coach. When the Doctor had got down upon the foot-pavement, he called out, "Fare you well," and, without looking back, sprang away with a kind of assumed briskness—striving to hide his emotion so.

Do our readers remember that first parting on the quay at Harwich, twenty years ago? We shall not have to describe another: Johnson and his worshipper never met again. O these partings! They make the very youngest of us feel as if we were hundreds of years old.

Boswell was thus constrained to leave his "pious negotiation" in the hands of others, in the hope that it would come to a successful issue.

On July 6th the Doctor wrote to Sir Joshua Reynolds:—

"I am going, I hope, in a few days, to try the air of Derbyshire, but hope to see you before I go. Let me, however, mention to you what I have much at heart.—If the Chancellor should continue his attention to Mr. Boswell's request, and confer with you on the means of relieving my languid state, I am very desirous to avoid the appearance of asking money upon false pretences. desire you to represent to his lordship, what, as soon as it is suggested, he will perceive to be reasonable,—That, if I grow much worse, I shall be afraid to leave my physicians, to suffer the inconveniences of travel, and pine in the solitude of a foreign country; -that, if I grow much better, of which indeed there is now little appearance, I shall not wish to leave my friends and my domestic comforts; for I do not travel for pleasure or curiosity; yet if I should recover, curiosity would revive.—In my present state, I am desirous to make a struggle for a little longer life, and hope to obtain some help from a softer climate. Do for me what you can."

Notwithstanding Thurlow's earnest endeavours, an increase of the Doctor's pension was refused; but the Chancellor himself generously offered to advance five or six hundred pounds, on a mortgage of the present pension,—explaining the meaning of the mortgage to be, that he wished the business conducted in such a manner that our Author should appear to lie under the least possible obligation. Such delicacy and generosity combined were to be gratefully acknowledged, although the larger purpose had failed. Johnson therefore wrote the Chancellor the following letter of thanks—a noble, manly letter; with a touch of tenderness in it too:—

"TO THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR.

" My LORD,

"September, 1784.

"After a long and not inattentive observation of mankind, the generosity of your Lordship's offer raises in me not less wonder than gratitude. Bounty so liberally bestowed, I should gladly receive, if my condition made it necessary; for to such a mind, who would not be proud to own his obligations? But it has pleased GoD to restore me to so great a measure of health, that if I should now appropriate so much of a fortune destined to do good, I could not escape from myself the charge of advancing a false claim. My journey to the continent, though I once thought it necessary, was never much encouraged by my physicians; and I was very desirous that your Lordship should be told of it by Sir Joshua Reynolds, as an event very uncertain; for if I grew much better, I should not be willing; if much worse, not able, to migrate. Your Lordship was first solicited without my knowledge; but, when I was told that you were pleased to honour me with your patronage, I did not expect to hear of a refusal; yet as I have had no long time to brood hope, and have not rioted in imaginary opulence, this cold reception has been scarce a disappointment; and, from your Lordship's kindness, I have received a benefit, which only men like you are able to bestow. I shall now live mihi carior, with a higher opinion of my own merit.

"I am, my Lord,

"Your Lordship's most obliged,

" Most grateful,

"And most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

The Doctor was really disappointed, for he had unfortunately allowed his hopes to rise considerably while the negotiations were pending; he had said one day, "I would rather have my pension doubled than a grant of a thousand pounds; for, though probably I may not live to receive as much as a thousand pounds, a man would have the consciousness that he should pass the remainder of his life in splendour, how long soever it might be."

On that same occasion he had told his friends, what we are proud to tell over again for the honour of our race, that Dr. Brocklesby had actually offered him, out of his own pocket, a hundred a year for the rest of his life! The tears started into the Doctor's eyes as he told this splendid little story of brotherly love. What but a grand and intensely human nature could have drawn friends round about this man so? Misery may call forth pity, but only love can beget love.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONVERSATIONS—MIND CLEAR TO THE LAST—VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

(1784.)

OUR Life-Story is drawing to its close. But, before proceeding to give a short account of the Doctor's final visit to his native district, and then, in a few simple words, trying to make a picture of the last sad scene of all, we shall devote one chapter more to the record of the most interesting of his conversations during the days that have just flown away. His talk will be found as brilliant, lively, witty, intellectual, and *characteristic* as the very earliest specimens adduced.

When a person was mentioned who said, "I have lived fiftyone years in this world, without having had ten minutes of uneasiness," Johnson exclaimed, "The man who says so, lies: he attempts to impose on human credulity."

One of the company quoted against him some words out of his own mouth—two lines from his poem on Mr. Levett: "What, Sir," cried the gentleman, "do you say to

'The busy day, the peaceful night, Unfelt, uncounted, glided by?'"

This sort of reply the Doctor abominated; and he took his revenge, on this occasion, by pretty plainly accusing the speaker of being drunk: "Sir, there is one passion I would advise you to command; when you have drunk out that glass, don't drink another."

The gentleman had been perfectly right; but the Doctor's pistol had missed fire, and nothing remained for him but to knock

his opponent down with the butt-end of it. For Johnson must not be defeated: he was there as the Representative of the Majesty of the Tongue, and could not allow his sovereign to be brought into contempt through him. At times, when all other means had failed, he would close the gainsayer's lips with a joke—thus: "My dear Boswell, let's have no more of this; you'll make nothing of it. I'd rather hear you whistle a Scotch tune."

Boswell: "Mr. Burke has a constant stream of conversation." -JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; if a man were to go by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed, to shun a shower, he would say-'This is an extraordinary man.' If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse dressed, the ostler would say-'We have had an extraordinary man here." -- Boswell: "Foote was a man who never failed in conversation. If he had gone into a stable—" -Johnson: "Sir, if he had gone into the stable, the ostler would have said, 'Here has been a comical fellow;' but he would not have respected him."-Boswell: "And, Sir, the ostler would have answered him, would have given him as good as he brought, as the common saying is."-JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; and Foote would have answered the ostler.-When Burke does not descend to be merry, his conversation is very superior indeed. There is no proportion between the powers which he shows in serious talk and in When he lets himself down to that, he is in the jocularity. kennel."

JOHNSON: "Oh! gentlemen, I must tell you a very great thing. The Empress of Russia has ordered 'The Rambler' to be translated into the Russian language; so I shall be read on the banks of the Wolga. Horace boasts that his fame would extend as far as the banks of the Rhone; now the Wolga is farther from me than the Rhone was from Horace."—Boswell: "You must certainly be pleased with this, Sir."—Johnson: "I am pleased, Sir, to be sure. A man is pleased to find he has succeeded in that which he has endeavoured to do."

A gentleman happened to say that he paid no regard to the arguments of counsel at the bar of the House of Commons, because they were paid for speaking.

JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, argument is argument. You cannot help paying regard to their arguments, if they are good. If it were testimony, you might disregard it, if you knew that it was purchased. There is a beautiful image in Boyle upon this subject: Testimony is like an arrow shot from a long bow; the force of it depends on the strength of the hand that draws it. Argument is like an arrow from a cross-bow, which has equal force though shot by a child."

Our next is not a conversation, only three simple words—simple but full of character. A clergyman being mentioned who had given up great prospects of preferment in the Church of England on his conversion to the Roman Catholic faith, Johnson exclaimed with fervour, "God bless him!" The Doctor was himself a staunch Church-of-England man, but he was a still stauncher lover of sincerity which had *proved* itself sincere by sacrifice. He knew very well that all the Churches are but clothes, better or worse made, for the human spirit's deepest yearnings.

Speaking of the fear of death, Boswell remarked that women, though "the weaker vessels," were not more afraid of it than men.

JOHNSON: "Because they are less wicked."—Dr. ADAMS:
"They are more pious."—JOHNSON: "No, hang 'em, they are not more pious. A wicked fellow is the most pious when he takes to it. He'll beat you all at piety."

Miss Adams mentioned a gentleman of licentious character, and said, "Suppose I had a mind to marry that gentleman, would my parents consent?"—Johnson: "Yes, they'd consent, and you'd go. You'd go, though they did not consent."—Miss Adams: "Perhaps their opposing might make me go."—Johnson: "Oh, very well; you'd take one whom you think a bad man, to have the pleasure of vexing your parents. You put me in mind of Dr. Barrowby, the physician, who was very fond of swine's flesh. One day, when he was eating it, he said, 'I wish I was a Jew.' 'Why so?' said somebody: 'the Jews are not allowed to eat your favourite meat.' 'Because,' said he, 'I should then have the gust of eating it, with the pleasure of sinning.'"

426 "LET ME ALONE, LET ME ALONE."

The young lady shortly afterwards made a remark that pleased Johnson greatly; whereupon he turned to her with a good-humoured smile, and said, "That there should be so much excellence united with so much depravity, is strange." Our Doctor was a perfect courtier.

Let the following conversation be read with reverence; for the fountains of Johnson's soul were opened while he spoke.

JOHNSON: "I know of no good prayers but those in the 'Book of Common Prayer."—DR. Adams (very earnestly): "I wish, Sir, you would compose some family prayers."—JOHNSON: "I will not compose prayers for you, Sir, because you can do it for yourself. But I have thought of getting together all the books of prayers which I could, selecting those which should appear to me the best; putting out some, inserting others, adding some prayers of my own, and prefixing a discourse on prayer."

The company all gathered round him, and one or two of them urged him strongly to execute his plan. Their importunity seemed to agitate him greatly: "Do not," he cried, "talk thus of what is so awful. I know not what time God will allow me in this world. There are many things which I wish to do." They still persisted, Dr. Adams declaring that he never was more serious about anything in his life.

JOHNSON: "Let me alone, let me alone: I am overwhelmed."

Then he put his hands before his face and reclined upon the table for some time. What was it that shook the old man so? It was the thought—so terrible to us all—that the night cometh when no man can work; and his night was near. So much to do, and so little time to do it in: that is a thought that might well shake the strongest.

Speaking of the coarse invectives that had become fashionable in the House of Commons, Boswell said, "If members of Parliament must attack each other personally in the heat of debate, it should be done more genteelly."—Johnson: "No, Sir; that would be much worse. Abuse is not so dangerous when there is no vehicle of wit or delicacy, no subtle conveyance. The differ-

ence between coarse and refined abuse is as the difference between being bruised by a club, and wounded by a poisoned arrow."

On one of those evenings, a magnificent saying of the Doctor's about Milton was quoted in his hearing. Mrs. Hannah More had once expressed her wonder that the author of "Paradise Lost" should have written such poor Sonnets, and the Doctor had replied: "Milton, Madam, was a genius that could cut a colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones."

During his recent stay at Oxford, the Doctor had called upon his former acquaintance, Mr. Sackville Parker, the bookseller, and on his return had given this touching account of his visit:—
"I have been to see my old friend, Sack. Parker; I find he has married his maid; he has done right. She had lived with him many years in great confidence, and they had mingled minds; I do not think he could have found any wife that would have made him so happy. The woman was very attentive and civil to me; she pressed me to fix a day for dining with them, and to say what I liked, and she would be sure to get it for me. Poor Sack.! he is very ill indeed. We parted as never to meet again. It has quite broken me down."

Mention was made of a letter from the Rev. Herbert Crost to a young gentleman who had been his pupil, in which he advised him to read to the end of whatever books he should begin to read. JOHNSON: "This is surely a strange advice: you may as well resolve that whatever men you happen to get acquainted with, you are to keep to them for life. A book may be good for nothing; or there may be only one thing in it worth knowing: are we to read it all through? These voyages (pointing to the three large volumes of 'Voyages to the South Sea,' which were just come out), who will read them through? A man had better work his way before the mast, than read them through; they will be eaten by rats and mice, before they are read through. There can be little entertainment in such books; one set of savages is like another."—Boswell: "I do not think the people of Ota-

heite can be reckoned savages."—Johnson: "Don't cant in defence of savages."—Boswell: "They have the art of navigation."—Johnson: "A dog or a cat can swim."—Boswell: "They carve very ingeniously."—Johnson: "A cat can scratch, and a child with a nail can scratch."

There is no arguing with the Doctor in this mood: that is clear.

Johnson one day entered into a curious discussion of the difference between intuition and sagacity: "the one," he said, "may be called the eye of the mind: the other, the nose." A certain young gentleman argued against him, maintaining that nobody ever dreams of speaking of the nose of the mind. He went on much too long, and somewhat too presumptuously, thought the Doctor, who at length burst in upon his speech with a loud "What is it you are contending for, if you be contending?" And afterwards, imagining that the gentleman retorted upon him with a kind of smart drollery, he said, "Mr. -, it does not become you to talk so to me. Besides, ridicule is not your talent; you have there neither intuition nor sagacity." The gentleman protested he had meant no insult in the world, but, on the contrary, had the most profound respect for the Doctor. After a short pause, filled up with fears and horrible imaginings in the minds of the rest of the company:-Johnson: "Give me your hand, You were too tedious, and I was too short."-MR ---: "Sir, I am honoured by your attention in any way."—JOHNSON: "Come, Sir, let's have no more of it. We offended one another by our contention; let us not offend the company by our compliments."

That is a scene as good as a play.

Boswell ventured to ask the Doctor whether he did not think that the roughness of his manner had lessened his influence for good.

JOHNSON: "No, Sir, I have done more good as I am. Obscenity and impiety have always been repressed in my company."

—Boswell: "True, Sir: and that is more than can be said of every Bishop. Greater liberties have been taken in the presence

of a Bishop, though a very good man, from his being milder, and therefore not commanding such awe. Yet, Sir, many people who might have been benefited by your conversation, have been frightened away. A worthy friend of ours has told me, that he has often been afraid to talk to you."—Johnson: "Sir, he need not have been afraid, if he had anything rational to say. If he had not, it was better he did not talk."

And now, having reached almost the last stage of our hero's life, and taking a large look back over his long past, we are bound to confess that we see but little in the whole of it except what is grand and imposing on the one hand, or beautiful and affecting on the other. Those occasional outbursts of temper which have scandalised so many, seem to us so much a part of the man himself—the man we love and admire in spite of those weaknesses, to some extent because of them—that we cannot wish even them away. We therefore gladly endorse Edmund Burke's noble deliverance upon this often-alleged defect in his venerable friend's character: "It is well," said he, "if, when a man comes to die, he has nothing heavier upon his conscience than having been a little rough in conversation." Samuel Johnson is perfectly safe, then; if the universe is governed in the interests of honesty and truth—as we are fain to believe that it is.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE DOCTOR'S LAST VISIT TO HIS NATIVE DISTRICT—RETURN TO LONDON—DEATH-BED—SCENE CLOSED.

(1784.)

"TO THE REVEREND MR. BAGSHAW, AT BROMLEY.

"July 12, 1784.

"SIR.

- "Perhaps you may remember, that in the year 1753 you committed to the ground my dear wife. I now entreat your permission to lay a stone upon her; and have sent the inscription, that, if you find it proper, you may signify your allowance.
- "You will do me a great favour by showing the place where she lies, that the stone may protect her remains.
- "Mr. Ryland will wait on you for the inscription, and procure it to be engraved. You will easily believe that I shrink from this mournful office. When it is done, if I have strength remaining, I will visit Bromley once again, and pay you a part of the respect to which you have a right from,

"Reverend Sir,

"Your most humble Servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"You will easily believe that I shrink from this mournful office." There lies the reason of his having shrunk so long. It is thirty years now since he laid his beloved Tetty in the grave; and all this while he has not had courage to pay the dead its last sad due: but there must be no more delay—for the shadows are lengthening apace.

Next day he set out for Staffordshire and Derbyshire, in the hope that change of air and scene might work him some good. A

few extracts from some of the many letters he wrote while on this jaunt will give all the needful account of his state during this period.

"TO DR. BROCKLESBY.

" Ashbourne, July 20.

"The kind attention which you have so long shown to my health and happiness makes it as much a debt of gratitude as a call of interest to give you an account of what befalls me, when accident removes me from your immediate care. The journey of the first day was performed with very little sense of fatigue; the second day brought me to Lichfield, without much lassitude; but I am afraid that I could not have borne such violent agitation for many days together. I stayed five days at Lichfield, but, being unable to walk, had no great pleasure; and yesterday I came hither, where I am to try what air and attention can perform. Of any improvement in my health I cannot yet please myself with the perception. . . . The asthma has no abatement. stop the fit, so as that I can sit and sometimes lie easy, but they do not now procure me the power of motion; and I am afraid that my general strength of body does not increase. The weather, indeed, is not benign; but how low is he sunk whose strength depends upon the weather !-- I am now looking into Floyer, who lived with his asthma to almost his ninetieth year. His book, by want of order, is obscure; and his asthma, I think, not of the same kind with mine. Something, however, I may perhaps learn.—My appetite still continues keen enough; and, what I consider as a symptom of radical health, I have a voracious delight in raw summer fruit, of which I was less eager a few years ago.—Nowabite cura! let me inquire after the Club." . . . [The new Club at the Essex Head.]

"TO DR. BURNEY.

" August 2.

"The weather, you know, has not been balmy; I am now reduced to think, and am at last content to talk, of the weather. Pride must have a fall. I have lost dear Mr. Allen; and wherever I turn, the dead or the dying meet my notice, and force my atten-

tion upon misery and mortality. Mrs. Burney's escape from so much danger, and her ease after so much pain, throw, however, some radiance of hope upon the gloomy prospect. May her recovery be perfect, and her continuance long. I struggle hard for life. I take physic, and take air; my friend's chariot is always ready. We have run this morning twenty-four miles, and could run forty-eight more. But who can run the race with death?"

Not so very long ago, the Doctor had run a race in the rain, and beat Baretti; but he has no chance of outstripping this competitor.

"TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

"Ashbourne, August 19.

"Having had since our separation little to say that could please you or myself by saying, I have not been lavish of useless letters: but I flatter myself that you will partake of the pleasure with which I can now tell you, that about a week ago I felt suddenly a sensible remission of my asthma, and, consequently, a greater lightness of action and motion. Of this grateful alleviation I know not the cause, nor dare depend upon its continuance, but while it lasts I endeavour to enjoy it, and am desirous of communicating, while it lasts, my pleasure to my friends. Hitherto, dear Sir, I had written, before the post, which stays in this town but a little while, brought me your letter. Mr. Davies seems to have represented my little tendency to recover in terms too splendid. I am still restless, still weak, still watery, but the asthma is less oppressive. Poor Ramsay! On which side soever I turn, mortality presents its formidable frown. I left three old friends at Lichfield, when I was last there, and now found them all dead. I no sooner lost sight of dear Allan, than I am told that I shall see him no more. That we must all die, we always knew; I wish I had sooner remembered it. Do not think me intrusive or importunate if I now call, dear Sir, upon you to remember it."

"TO MR. LANGTON.

"August 25.

"The kindness of your last letter, and my omission to answer it, begins to give you, even in my opinion, a right to recriminate, and to charge me with forgetfulness for the absent. I will, therefore, delay no longer to give an account of myself, and wish I could relate what would please either myself or my friend.—On July 13, I left London, partly in hope of help from new air and change of place, and partly excited by the sick man's impatience of the I got to Lichfield in a stage vehicle, with very little fatigue, in two days, and had the consolation to find that since my last visit my three old acquaintances are all dead.—July 20, I went to Ashbourne, where I have been till now; the house in which we live is repairing. I live in too much solitude, and am often deeply dejected. I wish we were nearer, and rejoice in A friend, at once cheerful and serious, your removal to London. is a great acquisition. Let us not neglect one another for the little time which Providence allows us to hope.—Of my health I cannot tell you, what my wishes persuaded me to expect, that it is much improved by the season or by remedies. I am sleepless; my legs grow weary with a very few steps, and the water breaks its boundaries in some degree. The asthma, however, has remitted; my breath is still much obstructed, but is more free Nights of watchfulness produce torpid days; I read than it was. very little, though I am alone; for I am tempted to supply in the day what I lost in bed. This is my history; like all other histories, a narrative of misery. Yet am I so much better than in the beginning of the year, that I ought to be ashamed of complaining. I now sit and write with very little sensibility of pain or weakness; but when I rise I shall find my legs betraying me. Of the money which you mentioned. I have no immediate need. Keep it, however, for me, unless some exigence requires it. Your papers I will show you certainly, when you would see them; but I am a little angry at you for not keeping minutes of your own acceptum et expensum, and think a little time might be spared from Aristophanes for the res familiares. Forgive me, for I mean well. I hope, dear Sir, that you and Lady Rothes, and all the young people, too many to enumerate, are well and happy. God bless vou all."

"TO MR. JOHN NICHOLS.

"Lichfield, October 20.

"When you were here, you were pleased, as I am told, to think my absence an inconvenience. I should certainly have been very glad to give so skilful a lover of antiquities any information about my native place, of which, however, I know not much, and have reason to believe that not much is known. Though I have not given you any amusement, I have received amusement from you. At Ashbourne, where I had very little company, I had the luck to borrow 'Mr. Bowyer's Life;' a book so full of contemporary history, that a literary man must find some of his old friends. thought that I could now and then have told you some hints worth your notice; and perhaps we may talk a life over. we shall be much together; you must now be to me what you were before, and what dear Mr. Allen was, besides. taken unexpectedly away, but I think he was a very good man. I have made little progress in recovery. I am very weak, and very sleepless: but I live on and hope."

"I live on and hope:" the Doctor had determined not to ring in. At this very time he said to a friend one day, "I will be conquered: I will not capitulate."

His social feelings also were warm and active as ever. "Sir," said he, while old companions were dropping around him like withered leaves, and himself hurrying fast to the tomb, "I look upon every day to be lost, in which I do not make a new acquaintance." And the Doctor carried his social theory into practice, here and now, by forming an intimacy with a young clergyman-Mr. Henry White-to whom he communicated one little bit of information, without the record of which this biography would seem, to ourselves at least, very imperfect. Speaking of the days of his youth, Johnson said, "I cannot in general accuse myself of having been an undutiful son. Once, indeed, I was disobedient; I refused to attend my father to Uttoxeter market. Pride was the source of that refusal, and the remembrance of it was painful. few years ago I desired to atone for this fault; I went to Uttoxeter in very bad weather, and stood for a considerable time bareheaded in the rain, on the spot where my father's stall used to stand. In contrition I stood, and I hope the penance was expiatory."

What a beautiful blending of superstition and tenderness of heart!

Johnson loved his native Lichfield dearly: we have seen how he has been again and again irresistibly drawn towards it, especially of late years; and the readers of "The English Dictionary" will perhaps remember that under the word Lich the author suddenly breaks out into this apostrophe "Salve, magna parens!" [Hail, great mother!] While there, on this last visit, the Doctor ordered the gravestone and inscription over Elizabeth Blaney to be carefully renewed: a beautiful manifestation of feeling, linking his own pious memories to the tenderest fact in the life of his dead father.

But, notwithstanding the Doctor's love of home and all its endearing associations, his true *life* had, after all, been in London—and there he was doomed to die.

On his way back to the great city he spent a few days with his old schoolfellow, Mr. Hector, in Birmingham. "He was very solicitous with me," writes Hector, "to recollect some of our most early transactions, and transmit them to him; for I perceived nothing gave him greater pleasure than calling to mind those days of our innocence."

The Doctor then proceeded to Oxford, where he was again kindly received by his friend Adams, and stayed four or five days. "We had much serious talk together," says Adams, "for which I ought to be the better as long as I live."

He arrived in London on the 16th of November, and next day wrote the following kindly note of remembrance to Dr. Burney—the last this valued friend ever received from the man he so fondly loved and so highly honoured:—

"Mr. Johnson, who came home last night, sends his respects to dear Dr. Burney, and all the dear Burneys, little and great."

Shortly after Johnson's return to the metropolis both asthma and dropsy became more violent; and it was soon evident that the end was near. The thought of being speedily gathered to his fathers seems to have stirred anew all his natural sense of fellowship with those of his relations who had gone before.

"TO MR. GREEN, APOTHECARY, AT LICHFIELD.

" Dec. 2, 1784

" DEAR SIR,

"I have enclosed the Epitaph for my father, mother, and brother, to be all engraved on the large size, and laid in the middle aisle in St. Michael's church, which I request the clergyman and churchwardens to permit.

"The first care must be to find the exact place of interment, that the stone may protect the bodies. Then let the stone be deep, massy, and hard; and do not let the difference of ten pounds, or more, defeat our purpose.

"I have enclosed ten pounds, and Mrs. Porter will pay you ten more, which I gave her for the same purpose. What more is wanted shall be sent; and I beg that all possible haste may be made, for I wish to have it done while I am yet alive. Let me know, dear Sir, that you receive this. I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

During his last illness he was faithfully attended by four physicians and a surgeon; none of whom would take any fee. This man had made all who knew him feel that he had given far more than he could ever get.

About eight or ten days before his death, Dr. Brocklesby, on paying his morning visit, found his patient very low and desponding: he said, "I have been as a dying man all night." Then he broke out in the words of Macbeth's famous demand made of his physician:—

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased;
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow;
Raze out the written troubles of the brain;
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?"

Dr. Brocklesby solemnly replied:-

"Therein the patient Must minister to himself."

Johnson then asked what would be a proper annuity to a favourite servant; and, on being told that even in the case of a nobleman fifty pounds a year was considered a handsome legacy, replied, "Then shall I be nobilissimus, for I mean to leave Frank seventy pounds a year, and I desire you to tell him so." A will to this effect was made a few days afterwards.

With that strong natural fortitude which always characterised him, he now begged Dr. Brocklesby to tell him plainly whether or not he could recover. The doctor declared that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle. "Then," said Johnson, "I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded."

Johnson had at length met with an opponent whom he could not even jostle down; but he would at least meet his last enemy face to face, with a steady brain and a clear eye. He did not really fear death; but he was loath to leave a world where there still seemed to be work for him to do: it was not punishment he dreaded, it was perfect purity of which he stood in awe—and these two terrors are worlds asunder. His whole life had been a struggle and a fight, and, in dull moments, the victory had seemed to be on the wrong side: but let us see to it that we do justice to the noble man whose fine moral sensitiveness would not let him do justice to himself.

The Doctor, from the time that he was assured his death was near, appeared to be perfectly resigned, and was seldom or never fretful or out of temper. Occasionally, he was even half-jocular. When Dr. Warren, in the usual conventional style, hoped that he was better, his answer was, "No, Sir; you cannot conceive with what acceleration I advance towards death."

A man whom he had never seen before was employed one night to sit up with him. Being asked next morning how he liked his attendant, his answer was, "Not at all, Sir; the fellow's an idiot; he is as awkward as a turnspit when first put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse."

A friend having placed a pillow conveniently to support him, he thanked him for his kindness, and said, "That will do—all that a pillow can do."

Once, when his servant brought him a note, he cried, "An odd thought strikes me—we shall receive no letters in the grave."

He repeated spiritedly a poem which he said he had composed some years before, on the occasion of a rich extravagant young gentleman's coming of age. He had never repeated it but once since its composition, and had given away only one copy of it. We quote the poem here, both for its own sake and because of the circumstances under which it was recited this second time.

Long-expected one-and-twenty,
Ling'ring year, at length is flown;
Pride and pleasure, pomp and plenty,
Great . . . are now your own.

Loosen'd from the minor's tether, Free to mortgage or to sell, Wild as wind, and light as feather, Bid the sons of thrift farewell.

Call the Betseys, Kates, and Jennies, All the names that banish care; Lavish of your grandsire's guineas, Show the spirit of an heir.

All that prey on vice and folly
Joy to see their quarry fly;
There the gamester, light and jolly,
There the lender grave and sly.

Wealth, my lad, was made to wander, Let it wander as it will; Call the jockey, call the pander, Bid them come and take their fill.

When the bonny blade carouses, Pockets full, and spirits high— What are acres? what are houses? Only dirt, or wet or dry. PARTINGS.

Should the guardian friend or mother Tell the woes of wilful waste; Scorn their counsel, scorn their pother, You can hang or drown at last.

During all these last weary days the attachment of Johnson's numerous friends was steady, and their kindness unremitting. Mr. Langton's attentions were especially tender, and were as tenderly received:-" Te teneam moriens deficiente manu" [Dying shall I hold thee with my failing hand, said the old man to this faithful Johnson kept none of his acquaintances away from his bedside; the sight of a human face looking upon him with affectionate respect had always been sweet, and was sweeter now than ever before. One day Langton found Burke and four or five more sitting with the dying man. Burke said to him, "I am afraid, Sir, such a number of us may be oppressive to you." "No, Sir," said Johnson, "it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state indeed when your company would not be a delight to me." Burke, with a trembling voice, replied, "My dear Sir, you have always been too good to me." Those were the last words that passed between these two noble men-perhaps the two noblest men of their time: and they were not the language of debate—they were a loving and everlasting farewell.

Sir Joshua Reynolds he requested to do three things in memory of him:—To forgive him thirty pounds which he had borrowed of him; to read the Bible; and never to use his pencil on a Sunday. Sir Joshua promised all three.

A few days before his death he asked one of his executors where he would be buried, and seemed pleased when it was answered, "Doubtless in Westminster Abbey."

The sacrament was administered to him in his own room, and before receiving it he composed and uttered the following prayer:

"Almighty and most merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes it seems, about to commemorate, for the last time, the death of thy Son, JESUS CHRIST, our Saviour and Redeemer. Grant, O LORD, that my whole hope and confidence may be in his merits, and thy mercy; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance;

make this commemoration available to the confirmation of my faith, the establishment of my hope, and the enlargement of my charity; and make the death of thy Son Jesus Christ effectual to my redemption. Have mercy upon me, and pardon the multitude of my offences. Bless my friends; have mercy upon all men. Support me by thy Holy Spirit, in the days of weakness, and at the hour of death; and receive me, at my death, to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen."

" Men might well seek
For purifying rites; even pious deeds
Need washing."

• This was what the Church-symbols meant for Dr. Johnson—whatever they may or may not mean for us: and he did well to hold by them to the end.

On Monday, the 13th of December, a Miss Morris, daughter of a particular friend of his, called, and begged Francis to ask the Doctor to let her see him, that she might receive his blessing. The request was granted; the young lady entered the room; and the Doctor, turning himself in his bed, said, "God bless you, my dear!" These were the last words he ever spoke.

His difficulty of breathing increased till about seven o'clock in the evening, when Frank and Mrs. Desmoulins, who were sitting in the room, observed that the heavy respiration had ceased, and, on going to the bed, found that he had breathed his last. He had passed peacefully and painlessly away into the silent land: one more toiling brain and struggling heart for ever laid to rest.

Upon Monday, December 20th, his remains were deposited in Westminster Abbey, not far from the body of his friend and pupil, David Garrick; and over his grave was placed a large blue flagstone, with this inscription—

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.,
Obiit xiii die Decembris
Anno Domini
MDCCLXXXIV
Ætatis suæ LXXV.

"Feelingly sweet is stillness after storm,
Though under covert of the wormy ground."

And now, at the close of our delightful labour, it hardly appears to us that we have told this Story of Johnson's Life; it seems rather that the story has told itself. It was fitting that he should be everything, and we nothing—except a kind of living note of admiration, marking the finest incidents in a manly career and the finest features in a manly character. Such a story is its own best commentator: yet surely some little good must result from this new and simple setting of the old and well-worn facts. Communion, though but for a short while, with the spirit of this man's life, fellowship with his sufferings, sympathy with his sorrows, the sense of his virtues, and the felt presence of his genius, will surely bring a touch of healing to some wounded heart, or a word of strength to some weary brain. It has been well said, "The first condition of human goodness is, something to love; the second, something to reverence:" both these conditions meet, and meet grandly, in the Life of Doctor Samuel Johnson.

THE END.



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